

THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT IN EXISTENTIAL ANALYSIS

By

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Abstract

Existing research on the therapist development process has generally focused on how trainees acquire the knowledge and skills that have been identified as leading to professional competence. There has been less emphasis on how trainees experience the professional development process as related to their personal growth and development. Very few studies have focused on the experience of therapist trainees in long-term experientially oriented training groups. Additionally, there is a paucity of research on the existential psychotherapist development process, which may be partly due to the small number of North American existential training programs. In the present study, the researcher sought to discern how existential analysis (EA) trainees experienced personal development as related to their professional development as therapists. Interpretative phenomenological analysis was the methodology utilized. The researcher generated two master themes, each with two underlying themes that were further broken down into two subthemes per theme category. The first master theme of Interpersonal Processes was comprised of Witnessing (Being Witnessed and Bearing Witness) and Relating (Relational Depth and the Therapeutic Relationship), and the second master theme of Intrapersonal Dynamics included Personal Development (Personal Experience and Personal Growth) and Experiential Capacities (Self-Awareness and Presence). These master themes, themes, and subthemes are essential elements of the EA approach

to therapist development. Furthermore, participants underwent a deepening of their interpersonal and intrapersonal experience; thus, the recursive nature of the EA training process can be linked to the dialogical nature of the theory. An insider perspective from trainees on how they have experienced this process adds to an understanding of how their personal development has influenced their development as therapists. While considering the limitations of this qualitative study focused on a specific type of existential phenomenological postgraduate training, the researcher makes suggestions for future research on how personal elements of therapist training influence the professional development process.



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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this work to Barbara Wilkinson, a colleague in existential analysis. Sadly, she passed away in 2009. Barbara was an “existential gardener,” and she gave many gifts of wisdom about life through how she stayed connected to the world, other people, and herself until the end. Her light shines as inspiration in the many lives she touched. Barbara gave many gifts of wisdom through her correspondence with our group, including this message:

The days continue to be a fascinating and sometimes difficult journey for me. My ongoing mantra is knowing how deeply loved I am, how I am being guided to the other side with grace and care. We are all so blessed, knowing the magnificence that we are.

Chapter One: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

Findings from studies on therapeutic change have demonstrated that client factors account for approximately 40%, relationship factors 30%, the theoretical orientation of the therapist 15%, and expectancy or hope the remaining 15% (Lambert, Shapiro, & Bergin, 1986). Furthermore, the role of the therapeutic relationship has been consistently demonstrated to be a positive factor in the process of therapeutic change (Duncan & Moynihan, 1994; Sexton & Whiston, 1994; Wampold, 2007). It has also been found that the psychotherapist's degree of self-awareness and interpersonal involvement is directly related to the amount of positive regard that the client has for the therapeutic relationship (Williams & Fauth, 2005). Hill (2005) has suggested that by improving the development process for interpersonal involvement, therapeutic outcomes could be improved. Thus, the personal development of trainees is a significant issue that is related to the professional development process and the acquisition of clinical skills.

Orlinsky and Rønnestad (2005) highlighted challenges within the current training research paradigm on psychotherapist development. They stated, "Most research involving psychotherapists has dealt with specific practical concerns rather than the essential characteristics and development of the psychotherapist" (Orlinsky & Rønnestad, 2005, p. 9). Donati and Watts (2005) illustrated this distinction further by delineating two general areas of trainee development. The

first area involves the acquisition of skills and abilities that lead to formal or technical proficiency. The second area can be defined through the development of more personal characteristics. Although the attainment of skills and knowledge are unquestionably essential aspects of the psychotherapy training process, Cain (2007) believed that training programs could become more effective with an increased focus on developing the personal characteristics of trainees. He stated, “Clients are much more concerned about the personal qualities of their therapists than their techniques. . . . [I]n short, who we are matters more to our clients than our theory or techniques” (Cain, 2007, p. 3). Cain provided further evidence for his critique in noting how the outcome literature demonstrates that the therapeutic relationship (how therapists are with clients) is more curative than technique (what therapists do to clients).

One reason for the lack of focus on understanding how personal development influences the professional development of psychotherapy trainees may be the conceptual ambiguity that surrounds the terminology. It has been argued that the idea of personal growth has been difficult to define in the literature, because the meaning of the terms can shift depending on the context (Donati & Watts, 2005; Irving & Williams, 1999). Therefore, operationalizing the concepts of personal growth and development may be difficult. Donati and Watts (2005) believed that a reason for the lack of focus on trainees’ experience of personal development could be the distinction often made between personal

growth and professional development. For example, some approaches outside of the humanistic tradition consider these to be distinct domains that require different methods of training and believe that the development of personhood is a task best left to avenues external to a given training program's curriculum. Furthermore, some approaches even consider personal growth to be irrelevant as compared to the acquisition of knowledge and skills, which is seen as the proper task of therapist development programs. Ladany (2007) critiqued approaches to therapist training that do not emphasize the development of personhood, suggesting that this results in an excessive focus on theoretical knowledge and clinical skills at the expense of valuable opportunities for personal growth.

Although there have been studies about the therapist trainee development process (Hill, Sullivan, Knox, & Schlosser, 2007; Orlinsky & Rønnestad, 2005) and about practicing as an existential therapist (Wilkes & Milton, 2006), there has been a lack of empirical research seeking to understand the personal and professional development experiences of existential therapy trainees. The present study was done to contribute to knowledge about the trainee development process and to better understand the trainee journey through the training process of existential analysis (EA), a psychotherapeutic approach and therapist training program developed by Alfried Längle (2003). In Chapter 2, I review literature from the training program, including published work (A. Längle 1999, 2003, 2011) and some unpublished training materials (A. Längle, 2006, 2008; Längle &

Trobisch, n.d.), in order to illustrate how this approach concurrently emphasizes personal and professional development through a focus on expanding the personhood of trainees.

Personal Growth and Development of Psychotherapy Trainees

Research on the personal growth of psychotherapy trainees has mostly focused on understanding it through avenues external to training institutions. For example, there is an established body of literature on personal growth as seen through the lens of short-term experiential personal development groups (Ieva, Ohrt, Swank, & Young, 2009; Lennie, 2007; Luke & Kiweewa, 2010) and the supervision and personal psychotherapy process (Batten & Santanello, 2009; Norcross, 2005; Wiseman & Shefler, 2001). Although the literature on the influence that personal psychotherapy for trainees has on therapeutic outcomes has been inconclusive, there is near universal consensus on the importance of supervision in the trainee development process (Geller, Farber, & Schaffer, 2010). However, evidence has also accumulated about what could be lacking in the supervisory relationship in terms of experiences indispensable for the personal growth and therapeutic development of trainees (Batten & Santanello, 2009; Orlinsky & Rønnestad, 2005).

Until recently, there has been a paucity of research in terms of understanding personal growth from the perspective of the trainee (Folkes-Skinner, Elliot, & Wheeler, 2010; Grafanaki, 2010; Rønnestad & Ladany, 2006).

Therefore, the responsibility for the personal growth of trainees seems to have shifted to personal development groups, supervision, and personal psychotherapy, and overall there has been a relative lack of focus on the trainee perspective of the personal growth process. It is important to address this gap in the literature, because attaining a better understanding about the personal growth process can help ensure that the developmental needs of the trainee are adequately addressed throughout the different stages of the training process (Hill et al., 2007).

Existential Psychotherapy

Existential psychotherapy is an approach to therapist training that focuses on personal growth and development in order to help foster the relationship building skills of trainees. In accordance with the humanistic tradition, it is an approach that emphasizes the value of the relationship in the therapeutic change process. The existential approach emphasizes the creation of a therapeutic relationship that helps foster a sense of self-esteem and self-acceptance for the client (Cooper, 2007).

The existential psychotherapy approach to training aims to engender a way of being in the psychotherapist that becomes a part of the curative element of the therapeutic change process (McGinley, 2006). Thus, existential psychotherapy can be seen as a general approach to therapist training that seeks to encourage the expansion of personhood in trainees, as opposed to a method focused on teaching techniques or theoretical interventions (Milton et al., 2003). Imparting theoretical

knowledge about psychotherapeutic techniques is an important part of this process, but there is also a stringent demand for personal growth and development so that techniques can be applied within the context of an authentic and supportive therapeutic relationship (Farber, 2010).

I have reviewed why the existential approach to therapist training contains an element of personal growth as an integral part of the learning process. As previously noted, outside of research on the development of these skills through personal growth groups, supervision, and personal psychotherapy, there has been a lack of empirical research in the literature on how personal growth and development is experienced by trainees through the training process. I now review how the EA training program specifically aims to encourage the growth of personhood in trainees.

Existential Analysis

The EA training program is composed of a 2-year basic training component that covers the philosophical and theoretical basis of the approach and is spread out over 45 days. This is followed by a 2-year clinical training that focuses on the application of the basic training to clinical practice spread out over 36 days. Both sections of the training have an experiential focus ingrained into the theoretical material. The training is designed to cater to mental health professionals looking to deepen and expand their clinical skills as well as those in postgraduate training. Trainees are required to write exams and papers

demonstrating a grasp on the theoretical material as well as undergo clinical supervision and individual psychotherapy with a practitioner familiar with EA. There is also an evaluative structure to the training program to assess trainees in terms of the development of their personhood throughout the process. Currently, the training takes place in Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Czech Republic, Poland, Russia, Argentina, Chile, Mexico, and Canada.

EA training focuses on encouraging the development of the person of the therapist (Längle & Trobisch, n.d.). The experiential and phenomenological component of this training process distinguishes it as an approach to therapist development that focuses on the trainee gaining access to previously unregarded aspects of personhood. The approach also contains a congruency in terms of how it is practiced with clients; that is to say, the theory that is taught closely mirrors the essence of the therapeutic approach (A. Längle, 2006). The aim of the training process is the personal growth of the trainee through the development of the capacity for freedom and choice, which A. Längle (2003) termed the capacity for inner consent. The development of inner consent is one of the central areas EA focuses on in seeking to help clients overcome their presenting concerns.

Like A. Längle (2006), I posit that this method of training influences the personal and professional development of the therapist, and the aim of the current study was to better understand this process from the perspective of current trainees. A potential audience for this study includes psychotherapist researchers,

trainers, and trainees, as well as practicing clinicians. It may also be of interest to psychotherapy clients and to anyone interested in existential methods or phenomenology.

Statement of Purpose

Research on psychotherapy training involves vast and complex issues. Thus, various forms of empirical investigation are needed to provide alternative perspectives that will advance the knowledge base (Boswell & Castonguay, 2007). In this regard, there is a need to explore the trainee development process through a phenomenological perspective in order to illuminate the journey of becoming an existential phenomenological psychotherapist. This study focused on attaining an in-depth and idiographic understanding of the perspective of trainees in EA by exploring the lived experience of personal and professional development for EA trainees.

As noted, there has been a lack of empirical investigation of the personal and professional development process inherent to many psychotherapy training programs from the perspective of trainees (Folkes-Skinner et al., Grafanaki, 2010; Luke & Kiweewa, 2010). Furthermore, I have located no studies on the personal development experiences of trainees engaged in a long-term (i.e., more than 1 year) experientially oriented training process. With this study I sought to address this problem by exploring the lived experience of existential psychotherapy trainees undergoing training in EA. Two research questions guided this study:

1. How did trainees experience personal growth and professional development as related to the training program?
2. How did trainees experience personal growth and development outcomes in relation to their development as practicing therapists?

Assumptions and Limitations

One of the central assumptions made in conducting this study was that there is a connection between the personal growth and development process of trainees and their professional development as therapists. This link is essential to the logic of the study, because the development of a trainee's personhood is assumed to be a primary function of the training method of EA. There is evidence that the development of self-awareness does improve the interpersonal involvement (i.e., the relationship-building skills) of trainees (Goldfried & Davila, 2005), so for the purposes of this study I assumed that increasing self-awareness in trainees is one of the potential benefits of training processes that focus on personal growth. The assumed link between personal growth and professional development was a central limitation of this study, because many approaches outside of the humanistic tradition do not hold this view (Donati & Watts, 2005).

A central delimitation for this study must also be noted. The EA training program is distinct from more traditional North American mainstream therapist training programs, and it is designed as a postgraduate supplement to standardized training. It offers a specific type of postgraduate training experience (i.e.,

existential hermeneutic phenomenology), but if the overall experience is to be located on the training spectrum it should be considered in comparison to other postgraduate training programs of a similar regard, as opposed to all other graduate training programs. Furthermore, existential psychotherapy, as well as the greater humanistic tradition (e.g., depth psychotherapies and person-centered approaches) can be distinguished from nonhumanistic approaches through its emphasis on the role of the therapist's personhood in supporting the change process. According to Donati and Watts (2005), more behaviourally oriented psychotherapies outside of the humanistic tradition place more of an emphasis on "technical skills, as the principle [*sic*] agent of therapeutic change" (p. 481). This raises a cautionary note about the presentation of EA as a fundamentally unique training process. Other humanistic approaches that emphasize the therapeutic use of self in the change process also have a rigorous focus on the personal growth and development of trainees, and EA is simply a great part of this grand tradition.

Finally, my involvement as a current EA trainee must also be noted as a delimitation. I have a background in analytic philosophy and have conducted philosophical research with this approach, questioning the assumptions behind the current conceptualization and treatment of mental disorders. I highlight this delimitation to contextualize the nature of the findings. Furthermore, this study was conducted in accordance with phenomenological research theory in looking at an existential phenomenological research program. In summary, the nested

design of the research needs to be clearly indicated so that the reader is informed of the strong existential lens that informs this study. This research was conducted by a researcher with considerable background and training in existential philosophy, who is also a student of the EA program that was examined, using an existential phenomenological methodology with findings that generally support existential theory.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the psychotherapy training process has not been well researched from a phenomenological perspective, which indicates a need to focus on the experience of trainees in seeking to better understand the overall training process. The aim of this study was to better understand the lived experience of the personal and professional development undergone by trainees enrolled in the experiential and phenomenologically based EA training program.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

I begin this chapter by introducing some of the findings from the outcome research literature on the central role of the therapeutic relationship in the change process. I then review the trainee development literature to illustrate the lack of empirical understanding of how the personal qualities of therapists influence the overall training process. This is demonstrated to be partly due to an overemphasis on understanding the role therapeutic techniques or interventions have in inducing change. I then review the related concepts of personal growth and personal development to illustrate how personal growth processes have also been overlooked because of a lack of conceptual clarity. It is also demonstrated that a focus on professional development in the trainee development literature comes at the expense of a better understanding of personal growth. Evidence for the benefits of personal growth for trainees is then reviewed, suggesting that there is a gap in the trainee development literature on the individual trainee's perspective on understanding the personal growth process. I then review personal growth and development for trainees, linking them to findings on the benefits of encouraging self-awareness in therapists. This is related to experiential methods in therapist training that require the cultivation of an experiential sensitivity in the person of the therapist. Existential psychotherapy is then located in the greater context of the humanistic tradition. Finally, I review EA as an approach to training that puts forward the view that personal growth is a necessary component of the trainee

development process. This is demonstrated to be foundational in this approach due to the focus on the therapist's use of self in influencing the change process. I review the EA training process to illustrate how certain aspects of the theoretical foundation aim to foster growth and development in the person of the trainee as a way of encouraging clinical competency.

Outcome Research Literature and the Therapeutic Relationship

A substantial amount of research on therapeutic outcome has developed over the past 30 years (Duncan & Moynihan, 1994; Grencavage & Norcross, 1990; Lambert et al. 1986). Lambert (1992) summarized the findings from this body of research as demonstrating that the quality of the therapeutic relationship, as perceived by the client and usually within the first few sessions, is a central determinant of the therapeutic change process.

The Therapeutic Relationship and the Trainee Development Literature

The findings from the outcome literature on the central role of the therapeutic relationship have started to become integrated into the burgeoning literature on the trainee development process. However, Rønnestad and Skovholt (2003) posited that research on the therapist training process has lacked a focus on understanding how to best develop the interpersonal or relationship-building skills of trainees. They believed that this is an important issue regarding the professional development of therapists and that it requires more empirical study, noting "a close reciprocal relationship between how counselors/therapists handle

challenges and difficulties in the client relationship and experiences of professional growth and stagnation” (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003, p. 40). This means that therapist development is intricately related to formative experiences in the maintenance and repair of the therapeutic relationship.

Defining Personal Growth and Development

The role of personal development in the training process varies depending on the theoretical suppositions in a given approach. However, one specific concern raised about the trainee development literature is that there has been a lack of focus on understanding the personal growth and development process as experienced by trainees (Folkes-Skinner et al., 2010; Grafanaki, 2010; Ieva et al., 2009; Lennie, 2007; Luke & Kiweewa, 2010). According to Orlinsky and Rønnestad (2005), two seminal researchers in the trainee development field, the lack of empirical investigation of the personal growth and development process may be partly due to the overemphasis on researching the influence therapeutic techniques have on therapeutic change. They argued that this has led to a lack of understanding about how the personal qualities that individual therapists bring to their work can influence therapeutic change. They stated, “The study of psychotherapies has been favored over the study of psychotherapists—as if therapists, when properly trained, are more or less interchangeable” (Orlinsky & Rønnestad, 2005, p. 5). They suggested that this emphasis has led to a lack of empirical investigation about how certain personal qualities of therapists that have

a therapeutic impact can be most effectively developed through the training process. Rønnestad and Skovholt (2003) believed this paucity of understanding to be surprising given the evidence from the outcome literature that “variation in outcome across methods is smaller than variation in outcome among counselors/therapists within methods. . . . [I]t makes a bigger difference who the therapist is than which method is used” (p. 8). Therefore, attaining a better understanding of therapists’ personal growth and development is a valuable aim that could inform the training process, ideally leading to the development of more effective methods of training.

It has also been argued that the personal growth of trainees is underemphasized in the literature because the concept has not been easy to operationally define (Irving & Williams, 1999). According to Donati and Watts (2005), a general distinction can be made between two areas of trainee development: The first involves the technical skills and abilities that lead to a formal kind of proficiency (i.e., professional development), and the second can be defined through the refinement of more personal qualities (i.e., personal development). They stated, “Professional development is concerned with ‘doing needs’, such as techniques and skills, explanations and theory, validation and research, training and qualification, while personal development is concerned with ‘being needs’, like authenticity, interpersonal engagement, intimacy and self-valuation” (Donati & Watts, 2005, p. 476). This quotation highlights their view on

the therapist development process as a dichotomy between personal development (being needs) and professional development (doing needs). They believed both areas lead to the kind of integrated development necessary in training effective psychotherapists. Furthermore, they distinguished between personal growth and personal development in noting that personal growth “emphasises [the] counsellor’s own well-being” (Donati & Watts, 2005, p. 480) whereas personal development “impinges on both personal growth and professional functioning” ((Donati & Watts, 2005, p. 480). For the purposes of the present study, these terms are used somewhat interchangeably, as EA is demonstrated to be an approach that fully integrates personal and professional aspects of development.

Personal Qualities of the Therapist

There is a lack of empirical evidence in the literature on how the personal qualities of the trainee that support a beneficial therapeutic relationship can be best developed through the training process (Lennie, 2007; Luke & Kiweewa, 2010). As noted, this may be due to a focus on techniques and interventions as central determinants of the change process, as well as the lack of clarity around the concepts of personal growth and development. However, Norcross (2001) clearly identified a number of interpersonal skills that precisely illustrate what should be called forth in therapist training programs. In specifying aspects of the therapeutic relationship that have empirical support for positively influencing outcome, he emphasized the importance of the client’s view on the therapist’s

“positive regard, congruence/genuineness, feedback, repair of alliance ruptures, self-disclosure, management of countertransference, and quality of relational interpretations” (Norcross, 2001, p. 347). Although there is undoubtedly a technical aspect to learning how to effectively manifest these abilities, the kind of development needed seems to be related to the trainees’ efforts at personal growth. A related assumption is that the personal growth and development of trainees will lead to better outcome via an improved ability to foster a therapeutic relationship with a higher degree of these interpersonal skills that have been identified as curative factors.

Evidence of Benefits for Personal Growth and Development of Trainees

A general justification for focusing on personal growth in the context of therapist training is the idea that training should encourage insight and emotional well-being so that the experience can serve as a template in how to accompany clients through a similar process (Donati & Watts, 2005). Furthermore, there is evidence that the development of the person of the trainee leads to the therapeutic relationship having a more positive influence on the change process (Batten & Santanello, 2009). According to Goldfried and Davila (2005), this may be explained by an increased potential for the therapist to facilitate exchanges that help deepen the client’s sense of experiential awareness. They also believed that therapist proficiency with experiential methods may lead the client to feel that there is more depth in the therapeutic relationship. This may be due to the

therapist feeling more free and confident about effectively using the self to positive therapeutic effect (Hill et al., 2007). There is also evidence that this can lead to more persuasive modeling of positive behaviours by the therapist and lasting change for the client in the form of increased self-awareness, or insight, and a more accepting self-dialogue (Lilliengren & Werbart, 2005).

The Individual's Perspective on Personal Growth and Development

Research on the personal growth and development of trainees has mostly focused on short-term personal development groups (Ieva et al., 2009; Lennie, 2007; Luke & Kiweewa, 2010), or on the impact of supervision and personal psychotherapy (Batten & Santanello, 2009; Norcross, 2005; Wiseman & Shefler, 2001). However, research on psychotherapy training involves the evaluation of complex issues and as a result “require[s] multiple levels of investigation in which each level of analysis can provide different, yet complementary, types of information” (Boswell & Castonguay, 2007, p. 383). This means that there is still a need for a greater understanding of the unique personal growth and development experiences of trainees in order to produce data from multiple perspectives regarding the training process (Boswell & Castonguay, 2007). In this regard, in the present study I sought to explore trainee development via a phenomenological approach to the experience of trainees in EA.

Findings on the therapeutic relationship from the outcome literature and the personal growth and development literature for trainees have been reviewed. I

next further review evidence from the trainee development literature in order to outline the current knowledge base. A lack of focus on trainees' perspective of the personal growth process is further demonstrated in order to justify the focus of this study.

Personal Growth and Development in the Training Process

Empirical research on the experiences of individual trainees is still in its infancy. One concern about the trainee development literature is the lack of focus on the development process of trainees from the perspective of the individual trainee (Grafanaki, 2010; Rønnestad & Ladany, 2006). Only recently have studies on the individual trainee's experience of the development process started to emerge (Folkes-Skinner et al., 2010; Ieva et al., 2009; Lennie, 2007; Luke & Kiweewa, 2010). Grafanaki (2010) explained this lack of focus on the experience of the individual by noting that "studies have relied on quantitative data, often excluding the trainee perspective in favour of external perspectives" (p. 81). She believed that the paucity of understanding about the trainee's experience is glaring, because so much insight can be gained from examining the broader range of individual experiences of the development process.

Growth, Awareness, and Personal Development

As previously noted, the individual perspectives of trainees on their experiences of personal growth and development have been neglected in the literature; however, there is a well-developed body of literature on trainee

development that affirms the value of self-awareness in the development process (Beitman & Soth, 2006; Fauth & Williams, 2005; Hill et al., 2007; Lilliengren & Werbart, 2005; Williams, Hurley, O'Brien, & DeGregorio, 2003). Donati and Watts (2005) argued that the concept of self-awareness has been used as a stand-in for the related concepts of personal growth and development, but that the concept of self-awareness has suffered from conceptual ambiguity in how it has been applied. They proposed that self-awareness can be conceived of as involving “inner self-awareness . . . self-knowledge . . . [and] outer self-awareness” (Donati & Watts, 2005, p. 481). They believed that self-awareness is an important concept for understanding the growth and development process because “each of these three dimensions has an essential role to play in therapeutic practice, underpinning many basic counsellor skills” (Donati & Watts, 2005, p. 481). However, they also believed that increased self-awareness does not fully capture how personal growth and development can lead to improved efficacy for trainees.. Donati and Watts further described personal growth and development as depending on “self-awareness, self-understanding and self-experimentation” (2005, p. 483) in order to support a development process that improves therapeutic efficacy. This illustrates the need for an experiential component in therapist training that enhances the integration of developmental gains in the person of the trainee. In the present study, I have assumed that self-awareness in this sense is a foundation, although not sufficient by itself, for personal growth

and development. Following Donati and Watts, I have also assumed that an experiential element is necessary in the training process for the development of trainees' self-awareness to positively impact the professional development process.

Findings related to the personal development of psychotherapy trainees are reviewed next. For the purposes of this study, I have assumed that this form of development supports the ability to work with an experiential focus in therapy. The cultivation of this experiential sensitivity is linked to the use of the person of the therapist as an instrument of change, which is a hallmark of the existential approach.

Experiential Awareness and Personal Growth and Development

Experiential methods are common to most therapeutic approaches, because they can provide space for clients to learn new ways of processing and expressing emotions. Finding new ways of processing and expressing emotions does not simply mean encouraging clients to talk about suppressed feelings. Greenberg (2008) stated that "emotional awareness is not thinking about feeling, it involves feeling the feeling in awareness" (p. 52). There is evidence that fostering this experiential sensitivity in trainees may improve therapeutic outcomes by increasing the therapist's access to the emotional world of the client (Batten & Santanello, 2009). In describing this interpersonal capacity, Cain (2007) noted, "When therapists deepen their responses, clients deepen theirs but

when therapists flatten their responses to emotion, so do clients” (p. 8). Thus, clients model the level of emotional engagement or “experiential processing and self-exploration” (p. 8) that therapists present, which supports the idea of therapists becoming more effective by deepening their capacity to work experientially. In summarizing this argument for the role of personal growth and development in the training of therapists, Cain noted that the depth of the therapist’s emotional engagement seems to directly influence the degree of the client’s engagement, and this “emotional experiencing is consistently related to good outcome” (2007, p. 8). Furthermore, Cooper (2007) provided support for the value of cultivating experiential awareness in trainees by stating, “A process of self-exploration is essential in helping psychotherapists identify the barriers that they, themselves, may put up towards a more in-depth, genuine encounter” (p. 15). Thus, a benefit of therapist training programs that facilitate personal growth and development experiences is that they can help the trainee learn to accurately express and reflect emotions expressed by the client in a more authentic manner.

The Humanistic Tradition

It must be noted that humanistic, and in particular existential, approaches to therapist training generally emphasize the growth and development of the person of the trainee over technical efficiency in the training process (May, 1983). However, Donati and Watts (2005) suggested that outside of humanistic approaches, personal growth and development does not factor into every model’s

training process, as some approaches purport that the person of the therapist is not a central mechanism of change. Donati and Watts stated,

Personal growth is regarded as relevant to [therapists'] professional functioning and training depends upon the extent to which their theoretical orientation views the counsellor's personal and professional functioning as distinct or separable. For example, orientations which give greater emphasis to the counsellor's essential personhood or 'way of being', over technical skills, as the principle [*sic*] agent of therapeutic change (e.g. humanistic approaches) may regard distinctions between personal development, personal growth and professional development as more academic than real. (2005, p. 481)

This quotation illustrates how the validity of personal growth and development as constructs is related to the degree that personal growth and development is ingrained as an ethic in any particular model's approach to therapist training. Donati and Watts (2005) also provided an explanation for why personal growth and development is a commonly held value in many humanistic training programs. By their account, humanistic approaches to training often emphasize personal and professional development as distinct yet interrelated aspects with the aim of integrating experience between these domains.

Some of the main tenets of the existential approach to psychotherapy are reviewed next. The therapeutic use of self is highlighted as an essential element that justifies the requirement for the development of personhood in the EA training process.

Existential Psychotherapy

Within the existential tradition, personal growth and development is linked to professional development through the intimate involvement of the person of the therapist in the therapeutic change process (Havens, 1974). Thus, according to Havens (1974), the role of self in the therapeutic process distinguishes existential psychotherapy from the psychoanalytic tradition, which emphasizes the role of personal growth differently: “Psychoanalysis directed attention to the misuses of the therapist’s self, though the discovery and management of countertransference phenomena. It has not made comparable contributions to the uses of the self” (p. 1). Therefore, the requirement for personal growth through the trainee development process inherent in the existential approach can be contrasted with the psychoanalytic tradition of attempting to eliminate the influence of self in the therapeutic relationship. McGinley (2006) adequately captured the idea of why personal growth is required in existential training, stating that the “therapeutic relationship . . . [is] an existential claim, a responding; we ourselves are the relationship” (p. 305). Furthermore, in order to work most effectively in this manner, it helps for the therapist to have experienced the attainment of insight in overcoming personally challenging issues (Dean, 2003).

According to Farber (2010), existential psychotherapy posits that the process of change occurs within the bounds of a therapeutic relationship built on the acceptance of self and others. He believed that a significant amount of the

change process can occur as a result of the therapist being authentic and present for the client. He illustrated the value of existential methods in therapist training by describing the EA approach as one that generally “aims to expand the trainee’s knowledge of theory and technique, facilitate exploration of the person of the psychotherapist, and cultivate skills in the use of self as a change agent” (Farber, 2010, p. 32).

Existential psychotherapy is also an approach that encourages the development of awareness of self as an integral part of the trainee development process (Cooper, 2007; Farber, 2010; Schneider, 2007). May (1983), one of the central figures in bringing existential ideas to a North American audience, illustrated why this is true when he defined the existential approach as one “concerned with understanding man as the being who represses, the being who surrenders self-awareness as a protection against reality and then suffers the neurotic consequences” (p. 65). He also defined the approach as having an emphasis on “the real, living relationship. When we are dealing with human beings, no truth has reality by itself; it is always dependent upon the reality of the immediate relationship” (May, 1983, p. 72).

May (1983) illustrated why the development of awareness as a form of insight or self-knowledge is an essential outcome of the existential training process. He thought self-awareness is required in creating an authentic therapeutic relationship that help the client gain insight into the nature of the presenting issue.

This helps make clear the existential theory of change, which is that “the person of the therapist, as opposed to ideology or technique, is what makes therapy effective for a given client” (Cain, 2007, p. 6). Therefore, existential psychotherapy has a heightened focus on philosophical training that aims at providing experiences of growth and development in the person of the trainee (Farber, 2010).

Existential Analysis

I now review the EA training program with a particular focus on how it is aimed at influencing the personal growth and development of trainees. In particular, I outline EA as an approach that encourages personal growth and development through a theoretical model that specifies how the expansion of personhood occurs. It is demonstrated that this focus on personal growth is a requirement for developing the person of the therapist as an instrument of change. EA is an approach to psychotherapy training that supports the development of the person of the trainee. It encourages growth in the trainee through experiential learning based on A. Längle’s (2003) principles of the four fundamental motivations, his theory of existential meaning, and the development of inner consent. These three areas are reviewed next in order to illustrate the goal of the EA training process, which is to engender growth in the person of the trainee so that a lack of self-knowledge on the part of the therapist becomes less likely to impinge on the client’s therapeutic progress. An argument is presented about how

a lack of presence of the therapist, or inhibition in bringing full personhood forward into the encounter, can limit the potential of the therapeutic process for the client.

Training the Person of the Therapist

EA is distinguished by its specific focus on encouraging personal growth in trainees. According to Längle and Trobisch (n.d.), the development of the person of the therapist is a central aim of the training so that the self can be used effectively in the therapeutic process. This requires a sustained focus by the trainee in cultivating presence so that a lack of insight or self-knowledge becomes less likely to negatively influence the client's process. An example of the nature of the therapist's personal involvement could be when incongruence is sensed by the therapist between the content of what the client says and any underlying themes (e.g., "You say this is what it is like for you, but if I was in your situation I might feel differently."). The training process of EA involves helping trainees learn to maintain a strong sense of boundaries, while also accepting thoughts and feelings that emerge out of dialogue with the client. In line with its phenomenological grounding, EA focuses on personal growth through the training process to help the trainee learn to detect what is essential for the client, as well as for the trainee (Längle & Trobisch, n.d.).

Four Fundamental Motivations

There is a direct concordance between the theory on trainee development in EA and the clinical approach, which is another reason why the training process involves a rigorous approach to personal growth and development. A. Längle's (2003) theory is based on the idea of four fundamental motivations for a fulfilled existence, and these are explored as part of the training program. A. Längle's (2005) view on the stages of the existential development of the person will guide the therapist's view on the therapeutic progress of the client. The four fundamental motivations are stage dependent, as growth in one stage depends upon the level of fulfillment in previous stages. That is to say, challenges in one stage will inhibit development in others. EA can thus be conceived of as a process where clients are encouraged to examine and potentially alter their relationship to challenging situations, people, and feelings.

I now review the theory on the structure of the four fundamental motivations based on A. Längle's (2003) outline in the literature as well as in unpublished training materials (A. Längle, 2006; Längle & Trobisch, n.d.). The first fundamental motivation involves the individual's deeply felt relationship to the world. Successfully achieving a good relationship in this domain leads to a deep incontrovertible trust in the conditions of the world and involves assessing whether one can live a fulfilled life based on one's physical reality. The second fundamental motivation involves a feeling of the quality of life with its network

of relationships and feelings. A resolution in this area leads to a feeling of gratitude for life. The third fundamental motivation is reflected in the desire to be oneself as a unique and autonomous person. Achieving a successful resolution here can lead to a feeling of self-esteem. The fourth fundamental motivation involves the question of meaning and is oriented to possibilities for the future. A profound sense of affirmation in this stage leads to a sense of meaning and personal fulfillment with the conditions of one's existence.

It must be noted that the trainee also learns the therapeutic theory through an exploration of the trainee's relationship to life within the context of each of the four fundamental motivations (A. Längle, 2003). Training in EA is aimed at assisting the trainee in the development of personhood through an honest investigation of each domain so that the therapist can give better answers to personal challenges that may arise through responding to any of the fundamental motivations. The focus of EA is phenomenological, which means the theory of the four fundamental motivations is taught with reference to the trainee's own experience. As noted, the four fundamental motivations form the cornerstone of EA's clinical method. The phenomenological basis of the psychotherapeutic method is thought to be most effective when trainees can relate to their clients from their own experience (A. Längle, 2003). A. Längle's (2003) position on the four fundamental motivations as a central element in the therapeutic process of EA means that the trainee

must first come to terms with his or her being in the world [first fundamental motivation], then with his or her own life [second fundamental motivation] and finally with his or her identity [third fundamental motivation]. Subsequent to these tasks, the person is open for and prone to enter into relationships with a greater context (horizon), from which personal meaning is derived [fourth fundamental motivation]. This process has been documented throughout 20 years of phenomenological empirical research. (p. 25)

Existential Meaning

In accordance with traditional approaches to existential psychotherapy, A. Längle (2003) acknowledged the reality of suffering in human existence. In opposition to the traditional presentation of existentialist ideals, EA is not aimed at helping the client come to see life as good in spite of inherent suffering. Rather, it is based on the view that experiences of suffering can be integrated into an individual's existence, thus inspiring the individual to experience life with greater depth, richness, and sense of personal affirmation (A. Längle, 2003). Therefore, A. Längle (2003) proposed that the discovery of meaning is a central task for a fulfilled existence, stating, "Meaning is understood as a correlation of the demand of the situation and the understanding one has of oneself" (p. 14). This demonstrates A. Längle's (2003) view on existence as dialogical, which means that human beings are constantly questioned by life and meaning flourishes when answers can be authentically given in good conscience. For this process to take root in the person, a personal growth and development process is required on the part of the trainee; A. Längle (2003) believed that this allows sensitivity towards

inner experience to most effectively emerge through the training process. The cultivation of this awareness can help the trainee learn to be a model for clients undergoing this same process through their own therapy (A. Längle, 2003).

A. Längle (2003) conceives of life as questioning the individual based on the reality each person must encounter in addressing the existential meaning of existence. This approach to meaning relies on an idea developed by Frankl (1973), who sought to communicate the radical nature for the implications of his theory. He called for a

Copernican Revolution. . . . [I]t is life itself that asks questions of man. . . . [I]t is not up to man to question; rather, he should recognize that he is questioned, questioned by life; he has to respond by being responsible; and he can answer to life only by answering for his life. (Frankl, 1973, p. 62)

Throughout his philosophy, A. Längle has imported Frankl's (1973) idea of the existential turn in life, whereby life questions the individual and authentic living demands a meaningful response. This involves a change in orientation in the requirement to look to the questions posed by life in order to continually uncover the meaning of one's life that each moment presents (A. Längle, 2003).

Inner Consent

A. Längle (2003) believed that existence demands the person accept the existential givens, which involves affirming the value of existence by living with inner consent or "our inwardly felt or spoken 'yes'" (p. 15). This approach represents an affirmative philosophy on life through the idea that people possess

the inherent capability to provide fulfilling answers to the questions posed by the existential demands of life. EA focuses on helping clients attain inner consent by increasing the ability for more freely self-determined exchanges in relation to one's self and the world (A. Längle, 2003). This is why the primary goal of EA is to help the person, whether a trainee therapist or a client, develop inner consent.

According to A. Längle (2003),

EA describes the key for a fulfilling existence in finding a way of living with *inner consent*. This *inner consent* relates to what we do, to what we commit ourselves to or to what we choose to omit. In other words, *inner consent* is a continuous activity that underlies any fulfilled existence and the finding of meaning. (p. 5)

A. Längle (2003) posited that the development of inner consent is an essential element of trainee development and conceived of it as “saying yes” or affirming the value of one's life based upon a realistic and honest appraisal of the conditions of existence. This is a dialogical process, requiring an inner openness to decision, while at the same time an outer openness to the veracity of one's experience (Längle & Trobisch, n.d.). That is to say, the self is seen as constantly in a process of inner and outwardly reflected dialogue about the conditions of life and the meaning for the individual. The training program thus strives to develop dialogical capacity in interpersonal and intrapersonal forms of awareness so that one can truly decide to “say yes” to these conditions or else accept and endure them if the conditions cannot be affirmed or changed. This process illustrates the kind of personal growth and development that is aimed for as an outcome of the

training. A. Längle (2003) believed that the significance of helping trainees “say yes” to life is that it can help guide them to experience a sense of meaning and fulfillment and open new avenues for how they choose to relate to clients, as well as to the world and their selves (A. Längle, 2003).

The training program in EA focuses on themes pertaining to meaning and the development of inner consent. This is done through a focus on the individual’s own experiences, which are processed through A. Längle’s (2003) theory of the four fundamental motivations. These are posited by A. Längle (2003) to be an inherent part of existence, so there is a focus in the training on self-reflection of one’s experiences in working through these developmental stages. This self-exploration, often referred to as self-experience in the vernacular of the EA training program, provides a means for the personal growth and development of the trainee. Phenomenology is a core part of the psychotherapeutic method and it is posited that training in this approach involves a shift in the trainee’s way of being (Längle & Trobisch, n.d.). Längle and Trobisch (n.d.) described this shift as “lending my inwardness and surrendering to what is outside of me” (p. 9). Furthermore, the method of training, with an emphasis on personal growth and development through phenomenologically focused work, parallels the psychotherapeutic approach (A. Längle, 2006). That is to say, the trainee is guided through a path of development that will at times mimic the process by which clients come to experience therapeutic change.

Summary of Existential Analysis

EA distinguishes itself through a structured and systematized approach to training that incorporates and makes use of experiential elements in training the inner and outer aspects of the person of the therapist (A. Längle, 2006). A. Längle (2006) described a variety of clinical techniques that can be used in the practice of psychotherapy, but one of the most important aspects for the professional development of the trainee is that an understanding of the theory is grounded in one's own experience. I propose that the requirement of this intimate understanding of one's self in learning the theoretical framework is an essential feature of the personal growth and development process inherent to the approach.

Conclusion

This chapter began with a brief review of the outcome research literature to highlight the evidence for the importance of the therapeutic relationship in the change process. I then examined literature on how interpersonal skills are best developed throughout the therapist training process in order to demonstrate that there has been a lack of focus on understanding how the personal qualities of therapists can be most effectively developed throughout the training process. In particular, there has been a lack of focus on understanding the individual's experience of the trainee development process. Thus, a need was demonstrated for more understanding of the trainee's perspective of the development process, as this will help in ensuring the developmental needs of trainees can be effectively

met throughout the training process. I highlighted the relationship between personal growth, personal development, and the humanistic tradition of psychotherapy training to help locate this particular perspective in the field. I then introduced existential psychotherapy as an approach to therapist development that aims to expand the personhood of trainees and outlined EA as a specific existential approach that focuses on the therapeutic use of self. Therefore, this was presented a therapeutic approach that requires an emphasis on the personal growth and development of trainees. Finally, with this study I have attempted to better understand how a sample of trainees experienced any personal growth and development in relation to training as EA-oriented therapists. I have also attempted to explore how these trainees related any personal growth and development they experienced in the training to their professional development as therapists.

Chapter Three: Methods

This study involved an in-depth exploration of the lived experiences of trainees in EA. The EA model focuses on training the person of the psychotherapist through a rigorous experiential process with an integrated approach to personal and professional development. The experiences of current EA trainees have been investigated in order to increase understanding about how they feel the process has influenced their personal development and their professional development as practicing clinicians. The two research questions that guided this study involved (a) how trainees experienced personal and professional development as related to the training program and (b) how trainees experienced any personal growth and development outcomes in relation to their development as practicing therapists.

This chapter begins with a brief description of the research methods and the rationale as to why the research approach was chosen as the most suitable for this study. This is followed by a brief review of phenomenology as a qualitative research method and a description of the particular phenomenological method used, which is known as interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). I demonstrate that IPA is an appropriate method for gaining understanding about the personal and professional development experiences of EA trainees. This is followed by a description of recruitment

procedures and the interview process. I conclude the chapter with a discussion of the procedures used for analyzing data and performing trustworthiness checks.

This study focused on whether the individual experiences of EA trainees can be understood as part of a framework of seemingly disparate experiences that share essential aspects. I explored this by searching for convergences and divergences between themes that emerged for each participant, exploring whether there is a greater context of shared experiences regarding how trainees feel the personal development process has shaped their overall development as psychotherapists.

Overview of the Study Design

The method used for this study was chosen in order to provide an open and flexible research protocol that would allow the meaning that participants ascribed to the experience of training in EA to be better understood. The study was conducted using IPA because it emphasizes understanding the process by which individuals make meaning from their reported experiences (Smith et al., 2009). I conducted semistructured interviews using open-ended questions in order to limit the influence of the interview protocol on the emergence of the data.

Rationale for the Study Design

IPA was developed by Jonathan Smith (1996) as a methodology especially suited for research in health psychology. I chose it as the methodology for this study because it is a qualitative approach that incorporates three main elements.

First, it is used to apply a phenomenological perspective. Second, it is interpretative. Finally, it focuses on the idiographic elements of experience.

The first element that made IPA suitable for this study is that it is used to apply phenomenology to understanding the subject matter, which means as an approach it is used to understand the lived experiences of participants. According to Berndtsson, Claesson, Friberg, and Öhlén (2007), this involves a commitment to “a research process where methodological patterns are characterized by openness and flexibility” (p. 258). Analysis is grounded in the lived experiences described in participants’ verbatim responses. Theoretical assumptions about the meaning that people ascribe to individual experiences are initially avoided, because the aim is to uncover each participant’s unique experience of meaning making in regards to the process under consideration (Reid, Flowers, & Larkin, 2005). Furthermore, Reid et al. (2005) noted that IPA is indicated when it would be advantageous for participants to be “recruited because of their expertise in the phenomenon being explored” (p. 20).

The second element that made IPA favourable for this study is that it stems from hermeneutics; an interpretative element is acknowledged and applied in attempting to make sense of the experiences of participants. This means that the relationship between researcher and participant is factored in as an influence on the data that emerges (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006). As a hermeneutic branch of phenomenology, IPA involves the researcher striving to understand the data

through a self-reflexive lens applied to the participant's attempt to understand the experience being described. Smith et al. (2009) described this as a "double hermeneutic" (p. 3). It comes from Heidegger's view of the person as embodied being-in-the-world, which means a certain distance is necessarily assumed between the researcher's understanding and the subject's experience (Smith et al., 2009). Because being-in-the-world can never be fully communicated through language, it is assumed that there will be a gap between what the participant experiences and what emerges in the data. Therefore, Smith and Eatough (2006) highlighted how IPA requires the researcher to engage in constant self-reflexivity in striving to attain "an insider's perspective, trying to understand what it is like to stand in the shoes of the participant whilst recognizing this is never completely possible" (p. 324). The demand for reflexivity is an ethical requirement; researchers using IPA strive to report on the lived experiences of the participant as closely as possible, while accounting for the fact that this will never be entirely possible (Smith et al., 2009).

The third element of IPA that made it suitable for this study is that it is idiographic. According to Smith and Osborn (2008), this means the focus is on trying "to say something in detail about the perceptions and understandings of this particular group rather than prematurely make more general claims. . . . [I]t is committed to the painstaking analysis of cases rather than jumping to generalizations" (pp. 55–56). Using IPA, researchers focus on highlighting

distinct aspects of each individual's experience in order to provide an in-depth analysis about the unique aspects of the phenomenon under consideration. This is not to say that IPA cannot lead to more general knowledge claims or to the generation of theory, but it only does this via an inductive, bottom-up approach that is grounded in the particular idiographic experience of the individual (Reid et al., 2005). It is at this level of the individual's experience that training in EA has been explored in the current study.

A cautionary note must be made, because a debate exists in the literature related to how various approaches characterize and make use of phenomenology as a research method, epistemological approach, or psychological theory (Ashworth, 2003; Caelli, 2001; LeVasseur, 2003). This debate began through attempts to define phenomenology based on its historical origins and is largely unresolved due to the seemingly competing aims of various writers.

Phenomenology can be an esoteric methodological practice due to the highly technical terms and philosophical underpinnings of the approach. In order to complete a phenomenological study, the researcher must be highly sensitive to the divergences in theory and how any particular theorist's approach stands in relation to the unresolved aspects of the debate. Otherwise, a method may obfuscate the experiences of research participants through an attempt to apply an approach that is not ideally suited to exploring the experience being investigated. This concern should inform any attempted understanding of participants so that

the researcher can proceed respectfully in honouring their experiences (Berndtsson et al., 2007).

There is a significant amount of literature about the qualities that define a phenomenological approach, and it can crudely be split between advocates of descriptive phenomenology and advocates of interpretative (or hermeneutic) phenomenology. This split has led to a vast debate among a number of the social sciences amenable to phenomenological methods (Finlay, 2009; Giorgi, 2006; Lopez & Willis, 2004; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). It has led some descriptive phenomenologists to come up with strict criteria that a particular methodology must adhere to be considered phenomenological (Giorgi, 2010). In contrast, others have argued that IPA is phenomenological because it is characterized by openness to experience and researchers using it seek to understand how people make sense of that experience (Smith et al., 2009). The interpretative element means that IPA is then used to locate this understanding in a larger social and cultural framework (Larkin et al., 2006). However, it is also posited that the researcher's interpretation must stay grounded in the data by staying close to the participants' lived experiences. Reid et al. (2005) suggested that researchers do this by maintaining a self-reflexive attitude towards the data and making "a key commitment of IPA that analysis should be developed around substantial verbatim excerpts from the data" (p. 22).

There are further reasons as to why IPA was appropriate for this study. IPA is suited to a small sample size, due to the in-depth contextual analysis required of each participant's experiences, and purposive sampling from a homogeneous population (Smith & Osborn, 2008). The detailed interpretative analysis of IPA allows for an exploration of convergences and divergences between themes that emerge from this type of understanding of participants' experiences (Smith et al., 2009). IPA is also structured with a circumscribed approach to collecting data. There is an established literature (Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2008; Reid et al., 2005) that clearly illustrates the steps for doing IPA, which helps minimize misunderstandings due to the potential esoteric nature of a phenomenological research study. If the steps were not as clearly explicated in the literature, attempting to manage these issues could have been presented more of a challenge for a novice researcher. There are also clear criteria that allow for the evaluation of how IPA is applied. According to Reid et al. (2005), "a successful analysis is: [*sic*] interpretative (and thus subjective) so the results are not given the status of facts; transparent (grounded in example from the data) and plausible (to participants, co-analysts, supervisors, and general readers)" (p. 20). Finally, the philosophy that informs IPA is similar to the foundational principles of the training program in EA, as both incorporate Heidegger's hermeneutic theory. I thought that this approach would resonate with the research participants and allow me to most deeply honour their experiences in attempting

to understand them. Furthermore, I hoped that this would create a goodness of fit, where participants were comfortable with the research style afforded by the approach.

Participants

Four current trainees of Alfred Längle's EA institute training program were recruited from the International Society for Logotherapy and Existential Analysis (Gesellschaft für Logotherapie und Existenzanalyse–GLE–International). (The flyer for the general training program is attached as Appendix A.)

Participants were required to meet the following criteria:

1. Participants were current EA trainees in a Canadian cohort and had completed at least four seminars. This was required to meet the need of exploring personal growth and professional development experiences through a long-term training group (Luke & Kiweewa, 2010).
2. Participants were at least 19 years old.
3. Participants reported having an active caseload of clients in individual or group psychotherapy practice at some point during the EA training. This was required so that participants had recent experiences of clinical work with clients that they could refer to in reflecting on their professional development. An active caseload was defined as at least one client in individual or group therapy for a minimum of five sessions.

4. Participants committed to taking part in a 2-hour interview about their views on their personal growth and professional development as a result of the training as well as a 1-hour follow-up interview approximately 4 months later after the initial data analysis had been completed.
5. Participants were willing and able to complete the interview in English, and were willing to have the interviews audiotaped for the purpose of analysis.

Recruitment

A flyer and abstract (attached as Appendix B) explaining the proposed study was sent to the GLE via Alfred Längle in order to get permission to recruit members of the EA training program. The training coordinator of EA Canada e-mailed the flyer to all current members of the 2007 and the 2009 cohorts of the Canadian training program. Prospective participants were asked to reply directly to the researcher so that confidentiality could be maintained. I sent to anyone who inquired about the study via e-mail an introductory script (attached as Appendix C) that provided information about the intent of the study, what would be involved if they decided to participate, how confidentiality would be maintained, and other relevant information about the research. I also asked prospective participants if they were interested in setting up a mutually agreeable time to talk about the study details via telephone.

For prospective participants who confirmed interest, I read a script via telephone (attached as Appendix D) asking about their involvement with the EA training program. This was done to ensure that they fully met the inclusion criteria. If inclusion criteria were satisfied and they decided to participate in the study, I then asked prospective participants if they had any questions about the study based on the initial flyer or e-mail. I recorded their contact details and communicated that the informed consent (attached as Appendix E) would be e-mailed to them and in their possession for review at least 48 hours prior to the interview. I also told prospective participants that they would have a chance to review the interview questions (attached as Appendix F) that would be asked and that these would be received at the same time as the informed consent.

Meeting location options were discussed, including the participant's home, an office at the Adler School of Professional Psychology, or an agreed-upon personal office or rental office location. A meeting time was arranged at a time and place that the participant decided to be the most comfortable and convenient. I confirmed that confidentiality could be ensured at this location and that there were optimal conditions for audio recording.

Interview Procedure

I reviewed the informed consent document with participants and asked them to give a brief synopsis of their understanding of what this meant. I ensured that participants understood that study participation was voluntary and they had

the right to withdraw from the study at any point during the interview. The following was also explained via the informed consent document: Every attempt would be made to protect each participant's identity, but due to the small pool of subjects that the sample was drawn from, this may not be entirely possible. I then asked the participants to sign the informed consent if they were willing to begin the interview.

Once informed consent had been granted, participants completed a demographic survey (attached as Appendix G). I informed participants that completing this survey was optional and not required for them to participate in the study. If participants did not want to fill out the demographic information, only their contact information was kept on the demographic form in case they wanted to receive a copy of the results. Following this, I delivered a semistructured interview protocol (attached as Appendix F). I noted in the interview instructions, which I read out before the interview began (attached as Appendix H), that participants were encouraged to ask questions if anything I said seemed unclear.

In accordance with IPA, I asked open-ended questions in aiming to minimize the influence of the interview protocol on each participant's report of personal growth and professional development as experienced through training in EA. All questions in the interview protocol were asked (unless participants stated that they wanted to decline answering any particular question) and follow-up probes were asked where indicated. Participants were encouraged to respond with

whatever level of detail made them feel most comfortable. In accordance with the principles of IPA, I audio recorded the interviews with a computer software program called Audacity, so that I could fully attend to each participant's report of the experience and engage in active and sustained rapport building throughout the interview process. I also did this so that the data could later be accurately transcribed. I took notes in order to keep track of salient ideas that may have factored into later aspects of the interview. The notes were limited in this manner so that I could be more present and attentive to each participant's experience in order to ask any pertinent clarifying questions and follow up on any significant ideas that emerged from the questions. The interview recordings were kept on a password-protected external hard drive and stored in a locked box in my home.

All questions listed in the interview protocol were asked sequentially, unless a particular response by a participant dictated that a nonsequentially ordered question was more logically appropriate. To ensure confidentiality, I assigned each participant a number that was marked on the demographic survey and on the form that contains any of the brief notes taken for the purpose of tracking the participant's ideas. I kept these numbers on a master list that identified each participant by name and stored this list in a locked box that did not leave my home.

In accordance with Adler School of Professional Psychology's recommendations, I will keep all raw data (i.e., audio files, questionnaires) for 5

years after the work is presented. After those 5 years, I will destroy the data (i.e., have the data professionally shredded and erased as needed). I noted these audio recording transcription and storage procedures in the informed consent.

Bracketing the Researcher's Experience of Existential Analysis

It must be noted that I have been a member of the Canadian EA training program since 2007. This experience has played a large role in my personal growth and professional development, and the significance of the influence has been a motivating factor in wanting to carry out this study. Due to the influence this training has had in my personal and professional life, steps were taken to ensure that my involvement in the training could be bracketed off from the interview process so that the experience of other trainees could most fully emerge without undue influence from my expectations. Before any interviews were conducted, I took the following steps to address this concern:

1. I had kept a personal journal documenting my development over the last 4 years when I had been undergoing the training program in EA in conjunction with individual psychotherapy. I read the journal over twice without making any notes.
2. I then read over the journal again and made notes on relevant ideas that related to the questions being asked in the interview protocol.
3. I then applied the interview protocol to my experience and typed out brief answers to the questions asked.

4. I reviewed these answers and considered how my experience of personal growth and professional development related to my unique life circumstances over the past 4 years, so that this experience could be acknowledged and somewhat bracketed off from the interview process.
5. I then performed an epoché in line with the idea that hermeneutic phenomenology should involve the bracketing of the natural attitude. This was done in accordance with a suggestion by LeVasseur (2003), who referred to employing a “persistent curiosity” (p. 419) that helps inform a phenomenological study with a sense of openness to the experiences of participants.
6. I wrote up a summary of how my experience of the training, based on the outcome of the procedure described above, should be bracketed in order to maintain openness while administering the interview protocol. I reviewed this summary prior to interviewing each of the research participants in order to retain an attitude of persistent curiosity.

This process assisted me in staying close to participants’ lived experiences and allowing for alternative and potentially contrasting points of view to emerge. This was required because the training process of EA has significantly influenced my personal growth and therapeutic development, and participants may have had radically different views on the process of growth and development as a result of the training. In addition, I posit that this helped me gain insight into assumptions I

had about the personal growth and therapeutic development process I felt might be inherent to the EA approach to training. I posit that by identifying these beliefs and holding them in awareness throughout the research process, it assisted me in reducing the influence that my close involvement with the program may otherwise have had on the experiences of participants.

Data Analysis

I completed data analysis using the principles outlined by Smith et al. (2009) in accordance with the data analysis procedures of IPA. Although IPA can be a fluid approach, it is recommended that the novice researcher complete the steps in a sequential order with a lower level of interpretation so as to stay closer to the data as described by participants (Smith et al., 2009).

I audio recorded and transcribed all the interviews. In accordance with the principles of IPA as described by Smith and Osborn (2008), the entire conversation between each participant and I was transcribed verbatim, with an emphasis on capturing everything that was audibly spoken, “including false starts; significant pauses, laughs and other features” (p. 65). The general procedure with IPA is to “leave a margin wide enough on both sides to make your analytic comments” (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 65). Once the transcription was complete, I entered into the analysis stage with the goal of uncovering each participant’s sense or meaning-making process in regards to the experience of the training process. This required an interpretative process based on a “sustained engagement

with the text” (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 66) in order to allow previously unrealized meanings the space to emerge. I reviewed the answers provided from engaging with my personal journal before the analysis of each participant’s interview in order to ensure that my feelings could be bracketed to limit my personal involvement from influencing the analysis.

As outlined by Smith et al. (2009), the analysis proceeded via the following eight steps.

Reading and rereading the data. I read each transcript three times. The first time I read it while listening to the audio recording of the interview. Listening to the recording while reading the transcript for the first time assisted me in staying as close as possible to the data during later readings, because I was encouraged in subsequent readings of the transcript to recall the sound of the participant’s voice as he or she said the words (Smith et al., 2009). I focused on the meaning of the data for the participant and avoided any interpretation at this stage. According to Smith and Osborn (2008), at this stage of the analysis, it is essential for the researcher to become familiar with the data in order to allow unforeseen insights to freely emerge.

Initial noting. I made initial notes using space on the right-hand side of the transcript to denote anything that I found to have significance in the context of the participant’s experiences. Following Smith et al. (2009), I did this at the level of “descriptive comments, linguistic comments, and conceptual comments” (p.

84) and distinguished these three different styles of comments by using three different colours of ink to create visual marks of distinction that aided in the later analysis of the emergent themes. According to Smith and Osborn (2008), these three categories of comments can be seen as “attempts at summarizing or paraphrasing [descriptive] . . . associations or connections that come to mind [linguistic], and . . . preliminary interpretations [conceptual]” (p. 67). Smith et al. noted that at this stage, it is important to be “looking at the language that they use, thinking about the context of their concerns (their lived world), and identifying more abstract concepts which can help you make sense of the patterns of meaning in their account” (2009, p. 83). Due to the fact that I was a novice at applying the IPA approach to data analysis, conceptual comments that relied on interpretation were made with the utmost caution. The interpretative stage is posited to be the most difficult level of analysis because interpretation veers from what the participants have presented, whereas descriptive and linguistic notes stay closer to the data at hand. Smith and Osborn also noted that IPA does not have rules about evenly dividing the text into units of meaning so that the entire transcript can be broken down and structurally analyzed, as “some parts of the interview will be richer than others and so warrant more commentary” (2008, p. 67). As I went deeper into the transcript, my notes began to focus on “similarities and differences, echoes, amplifications and contradictions in what a person is saying”

(Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 67), as this assisted in setting up the later analysis in terms of finding convergences and divergences of themes between cases.

Developing emergent themes. Smith et al. (2009) noted a concern at this stage as the need for interpretation begins to emerge, because “at each stage the analysis does take you further away from the participant and includes more of you. However, the ‘you’ is closely involved with the lived experiences of the participant” (p. 92). I contained the process in staying close to each participant’s lived experiences through emphasis of the need to limit and, where indicated, cautiously apply conceptual or interpretative commenting. Through a focus on descriptive and linguistic commenting in the note-taking process, as well as through my bracketing process of my experience as an EA trainee, the analysis was primarily focused on each participant’s understanding of the experience. Any movement into conceptual or interpretative domains was closely grounded in the verbatim reports of the participant and justifiable by direct demonstrated linkages located in the data. The process of developing emergent themes occurred after initial noting had been completed in the right-hand margin for the entire transcript. Smith and Osborn (2008) highlighted how “the number of emerging themes reflects the richness of the particular passage” (p. 69) as opposed to the quantity of data present in any one segment. The process of identifying emergent themes occurs as

the initial notes are transformed into concise phrases which aim to capture the essential quality of what was found in the text. . . . So the skill at this stage is finding expressions which are high level enough to allow theoretical connections within and across cases but which are still grounded in the particularity of the specific thing said. (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 68)

Searching for connections across emergent themes. I began this stage by constructing a chronological listing of the emergent themes for the entire transcript in a separate computer file. The themes were then printed on paper and cut up, with each theme individually listed with a corresponding page and line number so that they could be traced back to the supporting verbatim extract. I then placed down the themes with adhesive on a large sheet of paper so that they could be spatially manipulated to explore possible connections. The outcome of this process was in accordance with the principle of IPA data analysis outlined by Smith and Osborn (2008) that “some of the themes will cluster together, and some may emerge as superordinate concepts. . . . [Thus the researcher should] . . . imagine a magnet with some of the themes pulling others in and helping to make sense of them” (p. 70).

I developed connections between themes through a number of techniques referenced by Smith et al. (2009), which are known as “abstraction, subsumption, polarization, contextualization [and] numeration” (pp. 96–98). Grouping similar themes under a greater superordinate theme based on their likeness is the result of abstraction, and polarization involves clustering emergent themes under a

superordinate concept by “focusing on difference instead of similarity” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 97). Subsumption occurs when it is clear that an emergent theme can provide a meaningful classification for other emergent themes; that is to say, it occurs when an initial emergent theme itself becomes a superordinate theme without any additional adaptation or rewording. Contextualization involves grouping emergent themes based on how they temporally or culturally materialize in a participant’s life. This is justified by the fact that “a transcript is shaped by the participant’s narrative, [and therefore] it may be useful to highlight constellations of emergent themes which relate to particular narrative moments, or key life events” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 98). Finally, numeration is a way of “taking account of the frequency with which a theme is supported” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 98). I analyzed numeration in terms of the overall context of the data, because the relative frequency by which a theme appears does not strictly determine the significance that the theme has in terms of the participant’s greater understanding or sense of meaning that she or he ascribes to a process or experience. A theme that is mentioned only once could play a large or significant role in the participant’s overall sense of understanding.

As a technique for ensuring that the researcher’s interpretative process in finding clusters of emergent themes directly connects with the lived experience of the participant, Smith and Osborn (2008) recommended “check[ing] in the transcript to make sure the connections work for the primary source material—the

actual words of the participant” (p. 72). Once this material had been fully developed, I engaged in a systematized ordering of superordinate themes in the form of a table or flow chart. Smith and Osborn also highlighted how “during this process, certain themes may be dropped: those which neither fit well in the emerging structure nor are very rich in evidence within the transcript” (2008, p. 72).

Moving to the next case. Before repeating the above listed steps with a new case, I performed an attempt at bracketing. Adequate rigour in this process was demonstrated to ensure that new insights into the object of study and understandings of the data could freshly emerge. I constructed a brief synopsis of my understanding of each participant’s sense of meaning or understanding of the process and experiences under investigation. This synopsis included self-reflexive notes on my thoughts, feelings, and beliefs as they related to the understanding of the participant’s experience. Once the analysis of all cases was completed and the summaries used to bracket off the knowledge gained in each individual case, I used these summaries as aids for the identification of shared themes between cases. It must be noted that in moving between cases, I first produced a separate table of emergent and superordinate themes for each analysis, and only when each case was fully completed did I attempt to look for shared, or subordinate, themes between the cases.

Looking for patterns across cases. At this stage, the tables that had been generated to represent the subordinate themes for each individual case were compared in order to let themes common between participants emerge. These are known as superordinate themes, and Smith et al. (2009) recommended that the data from individual participants be represented in a final table with supporting evidence for each of the themes listed. I listed verbatim extracts supporting the themes followed by line references that helped locate the extract in each of the original transcripts. I did this to help assess the validity of the data analysis process by creating an easily traceable record of the analysis. Smith et al. stated that IPA helps explore commonalities and differences in the experiences of a shared process, as the analysis of themes highlights “ways in which participants represent unique idiosyncratic instances but also share higher order qualities” (2009, p. 101). In order for a theme to be considered a superordinate theme, it needed to apply for at least three out of the four participants.

Writing up findings. The outcome of the analysis process involved the construction of a description of the participants’ experiences, relying on the direct presentation of verbatim extracts to support the interpretative work. Smith et al. (2009) noted that a central goal of IPA is to explore a connection for how the understanding of the experience of participants might be related to the initial research question (i.e., the impact of the EA training process on the personal growth and therapeutic development of the trainee). This is made manifest by the

researcher's engagement "in a dialogue between [the] findings and the existing literature" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 112). The goal was to demonstrate how this phenomenological understanding of each individual's experience at the idiographic level can "illuminate or problematize what other studies say" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 112). In turn, the researcher at this stage is expected to go back to the literature and see whether the literature informs the study's findings. Finally, suggestions made by Smith et al. for self-reflexively writing up the analysis were followed:

Evaluate what you have done. What have you learned from the process? How might you do it differently now? What are the good points and the less good points in the work? How well does what you have done relate to the research question you started with? How has the research developed? (2009, p. 113)

Trustworthiness Checks

Authenticity check. The first step in assessing the authenticity of the analysis was done in follow-up interviews with participants about the theme generation process. This was done once the data analysis had been completed for all participants. I conducted follow-up interviews to determine the credibility of my interpretations. I presented the analysis to each participant so that the theme generation process could be illuminated and an illustration could be made of how themes were drawn from each of the data sets. This was done to ensure a goodness of fit with each participant's interpretation of the data. If there were aspects of the analysis that did not accord with the participant's understanding of

the experience, a new interpretation was discussed that would resonate more closely for the participant. Any extracts or interpretations that did not fit for participants or that they did not want included were removed or altered; however, these revisions were slight and overall there was good agreement.

Following the same process, I did a second set of participant checks at a later date, after the analysis had been substantially revised. Even though this was not part of the process outlined in the informed consent, another participant check was deemed to be necessary due to the revised analysis and inclusion of different participant extracts in the presentation of themes.

Partial audit. A partial audit was conducted at different times by the primary supervisor of the project. This occurred through three meetings that spanned 7 hours over the course of the analysis process. This was done to show rigour in the theme generation process, as the primary supervisor reviewed my justifications for various steps taken in the analysis. The primary supervisor conducted the partial audit to assess how the themes tracked through the process of the analysis and to determine if the themes connected with the extracts presented from the participants' interviews. This was also done to evaluate whether there were any missing pieces in the line of logic in the study. I made a number of substantial changes throughout this process in my attempts to make the analysis more cohesive, transparent, and logical.

Expert check. An expert in EA also assessed the analysis process to evaluate expressions of rigour throughout the work. The expert was selected by virtue of the fact that he was also a trainee in the EA program, with 4 years of training and experience. Prior to the expert being sent all of the extracts as well as a summary of all the themes, the second participant check was conducted. This was done for the reasons noted above, but participants were also asked at this time if they would be comfortable with a 2007 EA cohort member reviewing their given extracts.

I asked the expert to review the themes and see if there were any that did not make intuitive sense. He was also asked to examine the analysis and give feedback on how coherent, plausible, transparent, and interesting my interpretations of the themes were. Based on his familiarity with the training program of EA, I also asked this expert to bring his knowledge to bear in seeing how my interpretations of the participants' themes fit with his experience with the training. The next step involved a conversation about the analysis process between the expert and I over the course of approximately 4 hours. I made revisions based on this discussion. Some extracts were assigned to different theme or master theme categories, and other extracts were removed if there did not seem to be a clear fit with certain categories or if the extract was not seen to add an interesting or useful element to the analysis in light of the research questions.

Chapter Four: Findings

Based on the experiences of the participants, two master themes emerged, defined as Interpersonal Processes and Intrapersonal Dynamics. From these two master themes, four themes emerged, and each of these had two subthemes. All themes are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Master Themes, Themes, and Multifaceted Subthemes

Master themes	Themes	Multifaceted subthemes
Interpersonal Processes	Witnessing	Being Witnessed Bearing Witness
	Relating	Relational Depth The Therapeutic Relationship
Intrapersonal Dynamics	Personal Development	Personal Experience Personal Growth
	Experiential Capacities	Self-Awareness Presence

Themes defined under Interpersonal Processes represented experiences primarily understood with reference to the presence of others. These themes required the participants to be somehow involved in relationship with other people in order for the themes to be activated as processes. Two themes emerged under Interpersonal Processes, Witnessing and Relating, with each having two subthemes: Witnessing included Being Witnessed and Bearing Witness, and Relating included Relational Depth and the Therapeutic Relationship. Themes

defined under Intrapersonal Dynamics involved experiences primarily understood in reference to participants' own internal, or self-focused, dynamics. Under this second master theme of Intrapersonal Dynamics are two themes, Personal Development and Experiential Capacities, with each theme having two subthemes: Personal Development included Personal Experience and Personal Growth, and Experiential Capacities included Self-Awareness and Presence.

Another main finding emerged in conjunction with the master theme categories. This was reflected in participants' interpersonal and intrapersonal experiences in the training, leading to a recursive deepening of experience that helped them better understand the theory of EA, as well as their personal and professional identities. These recursive processes experienced by trainees operated in conjunction with the dialogical nature of the training. The phenomenological focus on inner and outer forms of awareness assisted the trainees in more deeply coming to know each of the listed theme categories. I now provide a more in-depth discussion of these various theme categories.

Interpersonal Processes

What follows is a description of the two themes and four subthemes found under the domain of Interpersonal Processes. These themes were defined as experiences based on interpersonal relationships, or if they were primarily dependent on interactions with others. This master theme required that participants make sense of the influence that relationships with others had on their

growth and development in the training. Included is a description of the themes and subthemes as well as extracts from the participants' interviews that demonstrate how each individual theme played a role in participants' understanding of their training experience.

Witnessing. The theme of Witnessing involved having an empathic response to another person while that person was displaying vulnerable feelings before the group. Conversely, it also involved allowing self to be witnessed, or experienced, by others in this empathetic manner. Essential to the subtheme of Being Witnessed were feelings that emerged from the willingness, as well as from the willingness of others, to be vulnerable before the group.

Being Witnessed. In being witnessed by the group, a sense of freedom emerged for trainees. This allowed feelings of vulnerability to be transformed through the experiential process into something safe and valuable. It involved the process of them learning to allow their feelings and personal meaning to be witnessed by others.

Ellen described the feelings of being the focus of the trainer's and group's attention. Being vulnerable before the group was anxiety provoking for her (both scary and safe) and the training encouraged her to overcome her fear:

[There was] a little bit of fear, when you would think, "Uh-oh, what's happening?" Though I would have to say when it would start happening to someone else I'd kind of get excited. I knew it could be scary for them, usually intense, just this very present kind of "ohhhh, here we are!" And you knew something kind of precious and remarkable or really special,

something to pay attention to, was about to happen. . . . It is just this very present kind of [pause] awe. (Ellen)

Maria expressed how the nonjudgmental climate of openness inherent in her experience of the group was a supportive element that allowed her to risk being vulnerable in showing her authentic self: “I think experiencing a real lived experience of being the recipient, of not just one but of many people, who really wanted to see the real me” (Maria).

One of Jeff’s first experiences of being witnessed was in the context of his introduction interview (a one-on-one interview with the lead trainer that is designed to ensure one’s personal and professional suitability for the training). He described how having his emotional pain acknowledged as something that could be beautiful was a very touching moment that deeply impacted his sense of belonging in the group:

[The trainer said], “I see that you have been deeply wounded, and I believe that this has the potential for something beautiful.” I’ve never heard anybody say that of me before. For somebody to say that who I am and who I can be was beautiful—I knew from that moment, that this was a place that I belonged. (Jeff)

Freda described a similarity between the training process and the therapeutic process in noting how the trainer reflected something about herself back to her:

[The trainer] pointed out something I already knew; of course, that’s usually how it goes in therapy. So I’ve been processing that ever since. I realized that I’ve got a wall. I didn’t think I had one. I’ve got a wall. (Freda)

The metaphor of the wall related to her fear of having feelings of vulnerability witnessed by others. I interpreted this metaphor as representing a gate that she wanted to remove, as it often closed in defence of her personhood when her feelings of vulnerability emerged.

Bearing Witness. Another side of being witnessed was manifested in the experiences participants had in bearing witness to others. Bearing witness was supported by experiences of being witnessed; that is to say, learning to bring one's inner emotional world into the open to be observed, experienced, and reflected on by others had the benefit of making participants more skilled at accompanying others as they tried to do the same. Experiences of bearing witness, while related to the features of being witnessed, were distinguished by the fact that participants spoke about how being witnessed in the training impacted their ability to better bear witness to the suffering of their clients.

Ellen and Marie spoke about how the training helped them to be with clients in a deeply vulnerable state of grief and loss, which created a vastly different experience than might otherwise have unfolded. They highlighted how not backing away from the experience of deep pain benefitted their clients in helping them be more fully with it. Ellen said,

Because of the training, [I learned about] really be[ing] with [the client] and not waiting to get out from the hard parts. And it was really a different experience for her because of that. It certainly was for me. It felt okay and

safe, and I understood the value of it and the potential value for her.
(Ellen)

Maria described how this led clients to be able to more deeply accept the reality of what had occurred, thus opening an avenue for healing:

It was really good, because in hearing and witnessing all the details about [the clients'] suffering, I could really feel the sharp pain that they were experiencing. It was almost like a spiritual place for me. And it was because I could feel their sharp pain. By being able to witness that suffering, but hearing the details, it was after experiencing that with them, and them experiencing it themselves, that they were reaching past this harshness to such a bright place, and I was able to feel that bright place with the harshness. (Maria)

Freda found that the training afforded her opportunities to practice being with her fellow trainees, and from this she was able to develop a new sense of value for this way of understanding another person:

Watching the trainers and how they are, and experiencing how they are with me, also practicing in the class during discussion or check-in—that definitely helped to hone that skill, more than any other scholastic experience that I've had. . . . I really buy into the theory that to really understand somebody, you do need to bracket everything else and let them fill in the spaces. (Freda)

Jeff also described how bearing witness involved a bracketing of his preconceptions to allow for the client's experience to more fully emerge. He emphasized how the tentative nature of communicating this understanding to the client was an essential part of the experience:

It's me walking with you and saying, "Okay, if I'm understanding you, it seems like you're saying this," rather than me saying, "Oh, I know why you're saying that." With EA there is no place that you can walk that I am not prepared to walk with you. (Jeff)

Relating. Experiences of Relating involved participants talking about how the training enhanced the degree to which they were able to encounter others. It also included the concurrent awareness of the value of engaging with people in a deeper and more personally fulfilling manner. This emerged as an understanding of the value of relational depth. This theme was also defined through trainee experiences of feeling able to better use personal feelings in the service of their clients, thus encouraging a sense of intimacy in the therapeutic relationship.

Relational Depth. Relational Depth was tied to feelings of belonging within the group process (i.e., being a part of something with a shared value structure greater than the self) and also an increased desire for depth in personal relationships. The participants discussed the value of relational depth for their interpersonal growth and development, within the group and also in their personal relationships outside of the group context.

Ellen's experience seemed to reflect how the intense vulnerability displayed by every other group member led to a family-like bond: "Everybody in that group has bared some of their soul. And to me, that is like being blood brothers and sisters. Friendship is part of it but there is just a little bit something else" (Ellen).

Maria's experience of relational depth resonated with a need for belonging in her desire to be part of something where she could see her personal values more clearly reflected:

It's a community of just such well-meaning intention. And I hadn't had that for years. I always missed being part of that kind of community, and this is just the most similar experience to that spiritual community that I've had for years. It's just the deep sharing and the good intentions.
(Maria)

Freda described her experience of having her personal relationships and work blend with the content of the training:

It's really an ongoing day-to-day talking with your family/friends thing, work, everywhere. Really, it infiltrates [everything]. . . . [I also focused on] bringing others with me, because I think that's so important when you are taking a journey, because you don't leave those who are important in your life behind, because you could create distance in your personal relationships. (Freda)

Jeff also spoke about what he learned about how boundary setting impacted his relationships. He discovered that boundary setting was not only a way of protecting self, but also a way of heightening intimacy in relationships: "When you set boundaries it allows people to genuinely be in relationship with you, because they know where you are. You can't be in a relationship with somebody where you don't know where they are" (Jeff).

The Therapeutic Relationship. This theme encapsulated participants' experiences of the interpersonal development they underwent in the relationships they were able to foster with their clients. While Relational Depth was related to

personal development in forming relationships, the experiences captured by the theme of the Therapeutic Relationship pertained to the professional development participants experienced in relating with their clients.

Ellen expressed how her development as a therapist was based on the idea of sharpening the tool of her person as an instrument of change. In learning to use her personal feelings for therapeutic effects (i.e., the therapeutic use of self), she felt encouraged to use her individuality in this manner:

It feels really good to do that in [therapy] because it's not like it's a neutral person; it's me, and I am having an experience to a story, and I can just share it. . . and [have] this real appreciation for it being unique. It is [the client's] story that is unique and precious, but what we are is quite unique and precious, right? It's not just them with any person; it's them with me.
(Ellen)

Maria focused on her experience in learning to attune to the feelings between her and the client as a gauge for the progress of the therapeutic work. She felt that by developing this sensitivity, she was better able to feel when she was not having an authentic connection with the client:

I think it's so important to attune . . . to the feeling between myself and the person. This is what I'm working with, so the more I can do it, the better. And if I'm not present with the client, and other stuff starts coming in, I can feel this disengagement between us. [The training has helped] with understanding the whole importance of really being with someone.
(Maria)

Through the use of the parable of David and Goliath, Jeff explained that he had come to view some of his other training experiences on specific techniques or interventions as potential impediments to an authentic therapeutic encounter.

He felt that some of this was based on the therapist developing a defensive protection of the personality structure, which in his view could impede the movement of the client by hampering intimacy within the therapeutic relationship:

David was going to go out to meet him [Goliath]. A guy said, "Oh, you need all this armour." So they put this big huge suit of armour on this little guy. And he could barely move, and said, "I don't need this." Got rid of the armour, got his sling, took care of the bad guy. . . . It's freeing from the unnecessary so that you can go about what needs to be really done. Not being constrained, hampered, oppressed by other issues that get in the way of being with the client, and in turn that get in the way of the client genuinely being with you. (Jeff)

Summary of Interpersonal Processes. In summary, the theme of Interpersonal Processes is defined as experiences participants had as a result of the training that depended on interactions with others. The participants noted how the development of the capacity for witnessing, including being witnessed and bearing witness, emerged out of the experience of vulnerability. They experienced the capacity for witnessing in being the subject of attention while feeling vulnerable, as well as through focusing attention on others who may have been experiencing similar feelings of vulnerability. In being witnessed by the group and being the focus of the group's attention, participants felt they developed confidence in showing their true feelings for others to observe. At the same time, participants also valued being able to see others taking these kinds of risks in presenting their true feelings to the group. As an observer of this process, participants felt that they were able to get a more complete sense of the feelings

behind the experience of witnessing, especially in regards to feelings of vulnerability that emerged while being observed by others.

The other theme under the domain of Interpersonal Processes, Relating, connected to experiences participants had in deepening their personal and professional relationships. Both of the subthemes, Relational Depth and the Therapeutic Relationship, pertained to the qualities of engagement in participants' relationships, for themselves and for whomever they were relating with (e.g., the client). The subtheme of Relational Depth illustrated how the interpersonal development participants experienced through the group process led them to desire more depth in the quality of their personal relationships. The subtheme of the Therapeutic Relationship emerged in the professional capacity to engage with clients at a greater degree of depth. The training process helped trainees gain experience at enhancing the depth to which they engaged in their relationships.

What can be taken from the participants' description of these four subthemes is that interpersonal experiences of development supported the groundwork for the intrapersonal development they also experienced.

Intrapersonal Dynamics

Following are a description of the two themes and four subthemes that fall into the category of Intrapersonal Dynamics. This master theme involves how participants understood experiences through an inwardly directed focus. Some themes may relate to Interpersonal Processes, but what defines the master theme

category of Intrapersonal Dynamics is that it contains experiences that participants made sense of without interaction with others. Included is a description of the themes and extracts from the participants' interviews that demonstrate how each theme and subtheme relates to their overall understanding of the training experience.

Personal Development. Personal Development emerged as a theme pertaining to the personal or internal work trainees did that was ultimately focused on their development as therapists. Through a personal focus on learning the EA perspective on the therapeutic process, trainees were able to embody an understanding of the emotional or cognitive experiences they attempted to help their clients explore in therapy. Furthermore, they were able to personally apply these realizations to their own lives through the development of their personhood.

Personal Experience. Experiencing the theory of EA from a phenomenological basis of understanding led participants to value a personal connection with the material. This encouraged a deeper integration of the theory, which helped trainees make better use of self in therapy and also brought a more subjective understanding to the material being taught. Learning the material through a focus on personal experience impacted the personhood of the learner; for some this was therapeutic for themselves and for others it enhanced their ability to be therapeutic.

Both Maria and Ellen discussed how the emphasis of the training on their own lived experiences impacted their development as therapists. Each noted how the training assisted her in accompanying clients through complex and intense struggles. Maria spoke about an example with a client where her own personal process in the training allowed her to accompany the client with more empathy:

It was after experiencing that with them, and them experiencing it themselves, that they were reaching past this harshness to such a bright place, and I was able to feel that bright place with the harshness. . . . And that is something that EA really stresses, that we can go to these places ourselves. (Maria)

Ellen spoke about being encouraged to bring in her own experience and acknowledge it in therapy. She felt validated by this, as it allowed her individuality and sense of personal uniqueness to be something she could apply in service of the client:

I benefitted from the position EA takes, which is that your job is to be you. And the permission, that was one thing I really like about existential analysis. . . . There is a lot of permission to bring in your own experience, and you acknowledge it. For example, I will tell a client, "I find that I am experiencing sadness for you." (Ellen)

Personal Growth. All participants referenced the subtheme of Personal Growth, which relates to a physical and emotional expansion of self as well as a concurrent awareness that a change process is occurring.

Maria and Jeff felt the training had changed them by strengthening their personhood. It helped alter their experience of being-in-the-world and gave a firmer positioning for self. Maria stated,

[EA] completely resonates with how I think, work, live, am in the world. It's like there's a language, more of a shared language, to parts of me. It solidified but also changed me greatly. I definitely feel so fortified as a person. (Maria)

Jeff also highlighted how the integration of personal growth led to physical benefits and allowed him to take greater ownership of the gains he made through the training, as they began to feel more like intrinsic qualities:

It was a process of, what I would call, integrating. After that, I was just noticing my balance, my physical presence, my physical being at ease, my physical relaxedness. And in contrast to before when I was saying, "Jeff is confident, Jeff is at peace, Jeff has courage," I would simply be saying, "I have courage. I am confident." (Jeff)

Freda talked about how the temporal aspect of the training related to her personal growth. She realized that personal growth cannot be forced on a timeline and that it is a dynamic process, as she observed everyone around her growing at different rates: "It allowed me time to grow. I think it takes time to grow, and you can't force it. I think it takes time to process, and you can't force that. You can't force these things, and [the process of EA] just allows it to happen" (Freda).

Ellen discussed how seeing the evidence of her personal growth was an essential part of her development process. She had been seeking a training experience where she would be able to integrate what she learned and have it change how she lived her life. It was important for her to see the evidence of change in her behaviour, because this reinforced her faith in the change process:

That was what I was missing when I would read different books and think, "You know, this is good, this could be life changing," but I couldn't seem

to sort of do whatever . . . [was] needed to make those things penetrate. And that's where this is different, because I would see that. (Ellen)

Experiential Capacities. This theme was defined by awareness participants developed through the training process. It involved self-exploration of personal aspects that had previously impacted participants' ability to stay in the present and use immediacy, or a here-and-now style, in therapy. Participants felt these experiences led to an enhanced sense of openness to their own emotional experiences. Although this was primarily described in regards to their intrapersonal development, gains they made in learning to relate better with self crossed over into their understanding of their professional development.

Self-Awareness. This subtheme relates to how self-awareness impacted the personhood of trainees in encouraging a better relationship with self. The participants reported that by bringing more awareness to their feelings, they were able to come into closer contact with their experience. Self-Awareness also emerged as a subtheme related to professional development. Better awareness around their personal feelings brought some of the participants a sense of courage in being with the hardest and most complex issues clients could bring to session. An essential element of the outcome of the training process is demonstrated in participants' observations on how unexamined aspects of self, or areas where they had unconscious blocks or inhibitions, could impair their clinical work.

Ellen described how she gained a changed perspective on her own competence as a therapist. She felt that the training helped her become aware that being uncomfortable with challenging feelings or wanting to avoid states such as anxiety or depression did not represent a personal weakness: “I might be more likely to pursue that . . . [question of] why am I uncomfortable here, or just be more open to that and not see it as a failing” (Ellen).

Similarly, Maria expressed appreciation for the awareness she gained through the training about how unresolved feelings could impact the client’s therapy”

If the therapist has not experienced or explored some of the themes that you might encourage a client to, and you are afraid to talk about your own fear or your own feelings of desperation to yourself—well, I think it can be difficult to bring your client to an emotional place when you have your own fears there. (Maria)

Jeff expressed gratitude for feeling better able to make meaning of experiences that he had struggled with:

For some time I viewed myself as a failure...now, I am at the space where I wouldn’t trade anything I’ve been through. It wasn’t a mistake, it was. And now I am in a position to make meaning of it...having been through that now, I am in a much better position to walk with those who are going through similar places. (Jeff)

Presence. Participants described the cultivation of presence as something that helped them become more engaged with their feelings. By becoming more present for themselves, they in turn became more present for their clients. The cultivation of presence involved experiences of discomfort for trainees as they

increased their ability to stay open and remain in contact with their feelings. The participants' experiences demonstrate that this involved the enhanced capacity to track and reflect on one's inner workings in the present moment.

Ellen described how the phenomenology inherent in the EA approach to training helped her be more present with her feelings because it connected feelings with values:

The part of showing up here—I mean, there is something in the phenomenology that allows this too, because EA gives a lot of weight to feeling, and feeling being connected to value, [and] that made it safer to show up with your feeling. (Ellen)

Maria described how she felt discomfort in not always knowing what was going to happen next in the training, but she explained that this was transformed into a positive experience as it encouraged openness in her: “It was scary, but it was something very alive. Just being in a position to just receive, basically. Just to be open and to receive and be present” (Maria).

Jeff described how his ability to be present with his feelings increased as he realized that his challenging feelings would be accepted and welcomed: “I could be real in my tears and . . . real with my frustration” (Jeff).

Freda demonstrated an awareness of presence in sensing her feelings, based on insight she attained that was triggered by the interview process: “I feel like now, in this moment, even talking about that, I've got a ways to go. I've got a lot more discovery” (Freda).

Summary of Intrapersonal Dynamics. In summary, the master theme of Intrapersonal Dynamics involved self-focused experiences related to the development of the participants' capacity for self-relatedness. The theme of Personal Development integrated experiences of the growth of the trainees' personhood with their development as therapists. For some, a sustained focus on their personal experience in learning the theoretical material led to a deeper and more subjective form of learning than they had previously experienced in other therapist training programs. This phenomenological style of learning the theory also demanded a rigorous focus on the personal growth or the emotional well-being of trainees, so that they could learn to more authentically embody the change process they were working on with their clients.

The other theme under the domain of Intrapersonal Dynamics, Experiential Capacities, involved participants' awareness of self in the service of therapeutic immediacy. Because EA conceives of the therapist's self as an instrument of the change process, a self-exploratory process supported participants' development as therapists. The subtheme of Self-Awareness was illustrated by how participants gained self-understanding about previously unexamined issues, where a lack of acceptance of a personal challenge may have had the potential to impact their clients' process. The subtheme of Presence related to the participants becoming more accepting of personal issues that had previously been unregarded and more able to become more present with

themselves and their feelings. This enhanced their ability to use their new awareness to bring more immediacy into their personal lives, as well as to their therapeutic work.

What can be taken from these four subthemes is that intrapersonal experiences helped participants expand their personhood, and ultimately their sense of capacity to work therapeutically with clients.

Recursive Processes

This section pertains to an observed class of experiences about the training process that resembled the experiences that occurred at the level of the master themes of Interpersonal Processes and Intrapersonal Dynamics and worked in an interrelated manner to support participants' personal and professional development. Thus, there was an iterative nature in the interrelated operation of these master themes. For example, Ellen talked about how learning the theory in this manner led to deeper lasting change in her life:

I would call it life changing because the layering of the content and the process did what reading a book or something hadn't been able to do. It kept with me. I would also talk about it in each workshop and the time in between with strangers or friends. It would just come up so much, and it was definitely being marinated on. It just seemed to be present with me, so I knew that [growth] was happening. I think because of the depth of the seminars you need processing and you would just go away so full and somehow . . . a few things would just go so deep. . . . [I]t was definitely marinating in there, and I was experimenting with things, and certain things would just take hold. (Ellen)

An unfolding process seemed to repeat throughout the course of the training that assisted trainees in more deeply integrating what they were learning. This process involved experiences of deepening relationships with others being connected with the enhanced capacity to deepen one's self-relatedness. Furthermore, as the participants' efforts at connecting with self were bolstered in this regard, they were able to stay more present with self while encountering others. Maria valued how the theory gave her a conceptual framework for learning to be authentic in her relationship with self, as well as with others: "It just put this simple little framework to . . . how to be myself in the world and to be with others" (Maria).

This occurred on the level of personhood for trainees through the initial stages of the training process, but it also crossed over into an enhanced capacity to connect and stay present with self while doing therapeutic work with clients. In other words, the integration of interpersonal and intrapersonal experiences throughout various aspects of the training process allowed for deeper interpersonal and intrapersonal understanding. Training in EA thus supported trainees in their development as therapists through the integration of interpersonal and intrapersonal aspects of their experience (between people/with self), which involved cycling through increasingly deeper levels of an iterative development process. In learning to stay more connected with self and modelling how clients could also do this, the training enhanced the therapeutic capacity of these trainees

through the manifestation of a sense of focused immediacy in their way of being with clients. Jeff highlighted how he felt this aspect of the training process helped him experience empathy as a core trait:

And with EA, none of that baggage comes along. None of those categories come along that would impinge on my being with the client. It's, if you will, the difference between empathy as a technique and empathy as a way of being. (Jeff)

Conclusion

In conclusion, the two master themes of Interpersonal Processes and Intrapersonal Dynamics demonstrate how EA is unique as an approach to therapist training through the program's impact on different facets of each trainee's life. The master theme of Interpersonal Processes showed the impact of relational experiences on the personal and professional development of trainees. It is interesting that interpersonal processes also provided supporting structure for the growth in trainees' intrapersonal understanding. The master theme of Intrapersonal Dynamics showed how the self-exploration inherent to the training process led trainees to develop more awareness of self and an enhanced capacity to be more present to personal issues that had the potential to negatively impact their ability to be therapeutic. Therefore, akin to the first master theme, it showed how intrapersonal change impacted interpersonal faculties, particularly in therapy. This integration of interpersonal and intrapersonal experiences led to a holistic training process with wide-ranging impacts on the personal and professional

development of the trainee. Thus, the themes and subthemes show how the two master themes are locked in a recursive cycle that deepened the trainee development process.

Chapter Five: Discussion

This study was conducted to address the gap in the therapy training literature regarding the trainee development process as experienced from the perspective of the individual trainee. This was accomplished through a phenomenological exploration of the experience of four trainee therapists studying EA. The aim of this research was (a) to explore how trainees understood personal and professional development experienced through the EA training process and (b) to gain insight into how they experienced personal development in relation to their development as practicing therapists. I thought that attaining a better understanding of trainees' experiences of the personal and professional development process involved in this training approach could help bridge a gap in the existing body of literature by bringing an insider's perspective to an area that has not been well researched from a phenomenological perspective.

Overview of Existential Analysis

EA is a phenomenological psychotherapeutic approach that emphasizes the interrelation between the therapist's professional and personal self. A vital component of EA is the notion of personhood, which is defined as an indivisible unity between the body, mind, and spirit (von Kirchbach, 2003). A. Längle's (2003) approach is interpersonal or relational, but it also emphasizes an intrapersonal understanding, as the capacity for relationships depends on the ability to relate with self. A. Längle (2003) wrote that EA highlights "our being

essentially dialogical, prone to and directed towards exchange with others. Being oneself, finding oneself needs the field of tension of the ‘inter-’, the ‘between’” (p. 23). EA seeks to simultaneously develop the interpersonal and intrapersonal capacity of the trainee. The very nature of the theory helps actualize the approach within the trainee’s personal experience. As a phenomenological method that focuses on the therapeutic use of self, EA works best when therapists are intimately familiar with the steps they encourage their clients to take. The trainee development process and understanding of what helps clients to change in therapy contain a congruency. According to A. Längle (1999), the integration of personal and professional, along with interpersonal and intrapersonal, forms of awareness assists trainees in authentically embodying the principles of EA in their clinical work.

Overview of Themes

Two overarching master themes emerged from participants’ understanding of their experience in the training: Interpersonal Processes and Intrapersonal Dynamics. Each of these master themes had two themes. Interpersonal Processes included Witnessing and Relating, and Intrapersonal Dynamics included Personal Development and Experiential Capacities. These themes were further broken into subthemes; under Witnessing were Being Witnessed and Bearing Witness; under Relating were Relational Depth and the Therapeutic Relationship; under Personal Development were Personal Experience and Personal Growth; and finally under

Experiential Capacities were Self-Awareness and Presence. These themes, once related to the existing existential therapy, trainee development, and EA literature, demonstrate how the training process of EA mimics the therapeutic process at the interpersonal, intrapersonal, and overall group process levels.

Interpersonal Processes

Interpersonal Processes is a master theme that appears throughout the participants' descriptions of interactions with others in the training program. Central to this theme are the trainees' relationships with others and how these relationships contributed to the way participants understood the meaning of their training experience. Witnessing, or observing the experience displays of affect had between self and others, and Relating, or the deepening of connections with other people, were the two themes under Interpersonal Processes.

Witnessing. This theme is divided into the subthemes of Being Witnessed and Bearing Witness to others during experiences that pertained to expressions of vulnerability. Trainees highlighted how the experiential nature of the training encouraged them to cultivate trust in displaying their own challenging feelings, and it also helped them learn to accompany other group members striving to experience a similar process. Feeling safe enough to be witnessed developed out of a sense of trust in the group members. Robson and Robson (2008), upon investigating the personal development of trainee therapists, stated that "safety needs to be experienced by group members before they can take the risk of

learning about themselves or others” (p. 380). The improved ability to bear witness to the suffering of clients developed out of the experience the trainees had in learning to process their feelings before the group, and also in accompanying other group members in a process of attempting to do the same.

Being Witnessed. One of the experiences valued by participants was being witnessed by others within the group context. Especially meaningful to participants were the opportunity and encouragement to share challenging emotions openly, so that others could reflect back an understanding of their sense for what these feelings might be like. Ellen emphasized “the willingness that people brought to share, and I guess even safety . . . creates this bond, this further safety, and trust, that we can work out the problems.” Her experience demonstrates how trainees experienced the building of safety and trust as central to the group process.

Bearing Witness. Participants also described their group experience influencing and deepening their development as therapists because they felt better able to clearly perceive others and the self. Schneider (2007) summarized the therapeutic value of this capacity:

To sit with clients in pain, to have no idea where that pain will lead, or whether it will dissipate, is unsettling indeed. The cultivation of trust, however, is one of the primary experiential tasks. Without trust, no therapist could have the steadiness, patience, supportiveness, and stark belief in the healing powers of the client that experiential work demands. (p. 36)

By witnessing group members striving to make personal gains, trainees became better at bearing witness to the suffering of their clients. In learning to appear fully before the group with their uncomfortable feelings on display, they gained confidence in their capacity to accompany a suffering client through similarly deep emotions.

Relating. The theme of Relating involved the desire to more deeply connect with others. The subtheme of Relational Depth emerged from personal experiences that assisted trainees in their capacity to form deep therapeutic relationships. In other words, participants' facility at developing professional relationships, evidenced by the subtheme of the Therapeutic Relationship, intertwined with the personal gains demonstrated under the subtheme of Relational Depth. A. Längle (2011) highlighted the importance of the capacity for relating in EA as a form of closeness or intimacy, writing, "Relation is like a bridge to the other over which life can flow" (p. 58). He felt that encouraging the capacity for deeper personal relationships in trainees is essential to the training process due to the deep exchange of feeling that is required in this approach's conceptualization of the therapeutic relationship:

To feel deeply, we need time. We need time to nourish relationships and to live them. Rushing makes this hard. Turning to establishes closeness. One gives closeness and admits closeness. One enters the contact zone, gives the other access to one's interiority, looks for access to the other, and dissolves the delimitation between inside and outside. Emotion is closeness measured by one's own life. (A. Längle, 2011, p. 58)

Relational Depth. The subtheme of Relational Depth involved participants deepening their capacity and desire to connect with other people. The experience of the participants also illustrated how the training helped them learn to tolerate and then cultivate a quality of depth in relationships as they worked on meeting others as subjects, while simultaneously bringing their subjectivity into the encounter. Participants also mentioned a desire to meet people more fully and create more intimacy as a result of an increased willingness to be vulnerable. This included increasing a sense of belonging, valuing the process of sharing deeply, trusting in the good intentions of the group members, and developing a better sense of boundaries. The development of this attitude of openness to relations, as evidenced by the participants' accounts, illustrates how the EA training program provided trainees with a safe place to work on developing deep and engaging personal relationships.

Knox and Cooper (2011) studied the experience of relational depth from the perspective of clients. They explained how clients seemed to sense this quality: "In the moments immediately prior to an experience of relational depth, some participants perceived a change in their therapist, feeling that they were . . . more real, showing more emotion, reacting differently, or as experiencing the participant differently" (p. 71). This supports the findings from the current study, as participants also highlighted how experiences of relational depth within the

training group increased their sense of competence by enhancing their ability to deepen relationships with clients.

The Therapeutic Relationship. According to May (1983), one of the essential characteristics of existential psychotherapy is that it emphasizes the value of the therapeutic relationship. He stated, “The essence of relationship is that in the encounter both persons are changed” (May, 1983, p. 128). Thus, both therapist and client need to be willing to be altered by the relationship for change to occur. Some participants described developing more sensitivity due to their interactions with clients in the therapeutic relationship, which is supported by Buber’s (1970) concept of the I-thou relationship as a reciprocal exchange of feeling. According to S. Längle (2003), from an EA perspective this forms “the basis of vital, existential encounter and relationship. . . . [T]his actualisation is the aim of every existential therapy and counselling” (p. 59).

The training program provided an environment for trainees to practice how to build and maintain depth and intimacy in personal relationships. All participants described how missteps were made along the way, but also how the opportunity to engage in relational repair was an essential part of deepening their experience of relationships in the group. It provided the trainees with the opportunity to expand their ability to relate deeply to others, especially when personal emotions were activated as impediments to genuine encounter. In

summary, most of the trainees described how they felt this improved their interpersonal skills with their clients.

Intrapersonal Dynamics

Intrapersonal Dynamics is the second master theme, which reflected the participants' experience of self in the training program. Central to this theme was how an exploration of personal dynamics and self-understanding furthered the personal and professional development of trainees. The theme of Personal Development involved a personal focus on learning the material that led to change through the provision of emotional or cognitive insight. According to Donati and Watts (2005), personal development is an overarching concept because it "impinges on both personal growth and professional functioning" (p. 480), especially within the humanistic tradition. The theme of Experiential Capacities involved the development of here-and-now awareness that supported trainees in being more present with their feelings and in learning to use immediacy to therapeutic effect. The findings demonstrate how participants developed better relationships with self. This focus on intrapersonal development fed back into the interpersonal domain as trainees also highlighted that they were able to develop better relationships with others, and in particular, with clients. May (1983) provided insight into the value of an intrapersonal focus for therapist training programs, as well as therapeutic methods, as he warned that if an intrapersonal focus "is omitted, interpersonal relations tend to become hollow and sterile" (p.

130). Krug (2009) emphasized the tremendous value that May's insight has for the training and practice of psychotherapy: "Not only are both intra- and interpersonal foci appropriate existentially, but May also argues that both are necessary so that neither mode of being is emphasized to the exclusion of the other" (p. 344).

Personal Development. The theme of Personal Development involved participants' understanding of how the requirement for them to bring their personal experience to the training helped them more deeply integrate the theoretical material as well as experience a personal growth process that emerged from this style of learning. Personal development is an element integrated into the EA training program due to the therapeutic use-of-self recommended by this approach. The theory is taught with a focus on personal experience so that the expansion of trainees' personhood (i.e., personal growth) occurs in parallel to their professional development. A. Längle (1999) justified the need to encourage personal development through the training process, saying that for "untrained therapists this kind of strongly participating relationship can cause difficulties like improper alliance or nontherapeutic privacy, chatting or friendly advice which bring the therapeutic process to an end" (pp. 14–15). Therefore, he felt that it helps for trainees to be aware of a variety of personal challenges to prevent these kinds of countertherapeutic responses from inhibiting the client's process.

Personal Experience. The essence of the EA training process as a phenomenological approach is that it involves encouraging trainees to experience the core emotional and cognitive features of the theory while referencing their own phenomenological content (A. Längle, 2005). Trainees learn to test the reality of concepts in EA by looking inward. Participants described how this focus on self-experience supported them in integrating the theory into their personhood. Cain (2007) offered insight into how participants can benefit when they draw upon themselves as therapeutic tools when he wrote, “Most clients do not tend to process their feelings uninvited while many prefer to avoid them. Further . . . the quality of the therapist’s empathic response to the client may deepen, maintain or diminish client’s experiential processing and self-exploration” (p. 8).

The emphasis on personal experience helped trainees develop a deeper and more meaningful understanding of what their clients suffer. Bassett-Short and Hammel (2008) noted that “one of the most formidable challenges for beginning therapists . . . is to draw structure from a particular orientation without letting theory obscure the complex unique individual in front of them” (p. 25). The participants described the value of personal experience as a way to better appreciate the personal uniqueness of their clients. The phenomenological nature of the training was an essential component in the trainees’ development as therapists, as it transcended the theory.

Personal Growth. Personal Growth is a broad and overarching theme that recurs in this research as well as in the literature on the trainee development process. Although experiences of self-awareness primarily were seen to stop at insight, or self-knowledge, the theme of Personal Growth went beyond this definition as participants related a process of self-exploration and the awareness that personal change had occurred.

EA is an approach that emphasizes the therapist as an instrument of the therapeutic change process. According to Donati and Watts (2005), this is especially significant for this kind of therapeutic method. They noted that this kind of approach depends on the “belief that a therapist needs to attain a significant degree of psychological health and awareness in order to be able to help another person to do the same” (p. 475). Aponte et al. (2009) added that attaining insight “requires not only self-knowledge, but also the skill to use this self-awareness in clinical practice” (p. 392). Thus, the theory of therapist development in EA depends on the personal growth of trainees.

Some participants described feeling more personally integrated through an enhanced capacity to discern and be guided by their personal values. Cain (2007) demonstrated how his perspective resonates with the participants’ understanding of the affective nature of personal values in EA, as he explained that emotion is “the body’s way of interpreting experience. . . . [E]motion tells us: what matters, what’s right, what’s wrong, what’s needed and hints at what’s forward” (p. 8).

Therefore, the use of self as a therapeutic tool requires understanding of the role feelings play in the body. Participants implied that their personal growth helped them to better understand the connection between body and mind.

Experiential Capacities. The theme of Experiential Capacities involved the expansion of self-awareness, in particular, the awareness of how one's blind spots could potentially impede the progress of clients, as well as a sense of presence with one's self. These findings are supported by Cooper (2007), who noted that "such a process of self-exploration is essential in helping psychotherapists identify the barriers that they, themselves, may put up towards a more in-depth, genuine encounter" (p. 15). The experiential nature of EA invokes the need for awareness of personal blind spots and a willingness to stay present with one's feelings. However, the development of the capacity to be more present to one's feelings may overlap with interpersonal processes and the development of trainees' therapeutic abilities. Friedman (1960) explained the value of the therapist being willing to develop competence in the use of experiential capacities: The therapist's "willingness to risk himself and his confidence in the client . . . makes it easier for the client to take the plunge into the stream of experiencing" (p. 193). Therapeutic approaches like EA that rely on an experiential method of engagement thus depend on the capacity to model for clients how they can become more present to their feelings.

Self-Awareness. Participants cited self-awareness as the development of insight or self-understanding about their thoughts, feelings, or behaviours. By developing insight into otherwise unexamined aspects of personal life, the trainees' personal benefits enhanced their development as therapists. Aponte et al. (2009) believed the development of self-awareness encourages "the ability of therapists to utilize their personal life history and inner emotional experiences to both identify and differentiate themselves from their clients" (p. 382). Self-awareness is therefore an important outcome of existential therapy training, because becoming deeply immersed in the experiential world of another requires a well-defined sense of self developed from personal exploration (Farber, 2010).

Aponte et al. (2009) felt it is valuable for trainees to engage in this form of personal work because "it promotes a freedom from the tyranny of shame about their hangups that allows them to actively engage with their vulnerabilities in the service of their therapeutic efforts" (p. 384). Aponte and Carlsen (2009) highlighted an important feature that resounds with the EA training process, as there is a secondary gain when therapists can "turn personal vulnerabilities into clinical assets" (p. 397). In learning to accept their own vulnerabilities, therapists became more adept at using these vulnerable feelings in the service of their clients. Cooper (2007) agreed that it is "the disclosure of such vulnerabilities that can be the turning point and it is through this process that clients may begin to feel a genuine caring towards another human being, and thus re-enter the inter-

human world” (p. 15). Guidance and modelling by the therapist therefore assists clients in adapting to their personal vulnerabilities, and it is plausible that this is maximally effective when therapists have explored their own awareness of these personal issues.

Presence. Presence pertains to a feeling of transparency within the participants’ emotional life. This included staying present to challenging feelings and the awareness of the value of doing so. As a feature of the subtheme of Presence, participants discussed feeling liberated to express feelings that they had previously been uncomfortable accepting. The participants all reflected on how they valued the opportunity to develop more presence in their lives. This involved learning to tolerate, and even appreciate, these uncomfortable emotional states. They also noted that this helped them improve their relationship with self, which is a significant finding as it aligns with the view in EA that clients can suffer from a lack of relation with self (A. Längle, 2003).

Schneider (2007) explained that experiential methods of therapy require trainees to develop their capacity to be present and to “tolerate and accept a wide variety of experiences within themselves” (p. 35) in order to inspire clients to do the same. He thought this can improve their ability to freely experience emotions, enhance the ability to choose, and increase their capacity to tolerate uncertainty. Schneider (2008) also emphasized how the development of an experiential sensibility, or the cultivation of presence, in trainees is not something most

therapy training programs encourage. He believed that this could augment the mainstream North American approach to therapist training because the development of presence is an “attitude that bolsters so much of the core of what practitioners prize . . . and it is one of the avowed tragedies of our contemporary era that precisely these elements are neither nurtured nor prized in standardized training” (p. vii). As the findings of this study demonstrate, the development of presence is an essential outcome that participants appreciated from the training process, marking EA, as well as potentially other experientially focused training processes, as valuable components in the overall training process.

Recursive Processes

Although not as prominently illustrated in the data as the master themes, another rich experience emerged. Participants described the impact of their personal and professional development as it reflected on their relationships between self and group (Interpersonal Processes), as well as how it reflected on their relation with self (Intrapersonal Dynamics). This process observation shows how interpersonal processes and intrapersonal dynamics worked together to facilitate the growth of the trainees. The participants understood this on an experiential level, and it assisted them in integrating the personal and professional changes they underwent into their overall development as therapists. These iterations operated over the course of the training program, thereby deepening the processing they had both of their self-experience, as well as of their experience

with other group members. They were also able to reflect on these experiences relative to their personal and professional relationships, furthering the recursive nature of the process by bringing these extra-group experiences back to the training process to be reflected on and deepened.

Central to the findings on the value of the recursive aspect of the training process is the notion of EA as a dialogical approach. Frie (2000) outlined the particular use of the concept of dialogue as he noted, “Dialogue in this sense is not only a mode of linguistic communication but denotes the interhuman dimension generally” (p. 118). The theory of EA focuses on helping people develop the capacity to establish more fulfilling relationships. The theory also purports that the relational nature of human beings is directed inwardly and outwardly, which is to say that the relationship people have with self provides fundamental support for the ability to have fulfilling relationships with others. In EA, the reality of human existence is thus conceived through a dialogical lens. S. Längle (2003) explained the significance of the dialogical capacity in EA as

an openness towards oneself, which likewise means, to accept an exterior reality as well as what occurs in my inner awareness, what is going on in myself, what is set in motion in myself, and to dedicate oneself to both with equal seriousness. As a consequence, human beings remain in continual dialog with the external world as well as with the internal world. (p. 58)

This reflects a major finding of this study, which is that EA encouraged the integration of interpersonal and intrapersonal awareness through the development

of the capacity for inner and outer dialogue. It must also be noted that this may be an outcome common to other primarily relationally focused forms of therapist training (i.e., humanistic approaches).

The opportunities that trainees had for reflection and feedback on their interpersonal and intrapersonal experience within, as well as outside of the group process, encouraged the integration of their personal and professional development. Luke and Kiweewa (2010), who conducted a study on the experiences of a long-term experiential process group for therapist trainees, noted that participants appeared to “utilize interpersonal experience as a means for systemic interconnection across other levels. Said another way, trainees frequently discussed how their interactions with other group members assisted in bridging their intrapersonal and whole group experiences” (p. 383). The experience of the EA trainees in this study is confirmed by their findings.

Summary of Themes and Recursive Processes

The experiences of the participants showed how training in EA focuses on interpersonal and intrapersonal styles of learning in the therapist development process. The participants described being impacted by both forms of experience. Their experiences illustrate how the balanced integration of interpersonal and intrapersonal styles of learning in the training program effectively assisted them in the development of their personhood as a therapeutic instrument. A. Längle (2003) summarized, “If we take the capacity for dialogue as a characteristic of

being a person (i.e., a being with mind and spirit and a potential for decision-making), then humans are always waiting for their completion by a ‘partner’ in the broadest sense” (p. 29). Hence, this supports the notion of EA as a fundamentally dialogical approach to therapist training that seeks to enhance relational capacities on both an interpersonal and intrapersonal level through the whole group experience of the trainees.

One unique aspect of the training program is illustrated in how participants processed experiences pertaining to the relationship between self and clients on interpersonal and intrapersonal levels. The data highlighted how these particular trainees found that the training process echoed what could happen in therapy. Cain (2007) summarized the value to clients when therapists model the “opportunity to learn to listen to themselves. As clients become better self-observers, especially of their feelings, intrapersonal and interpersonal behaviors, they often develop new perspectives that lead to more functional behavior and self-generated problem solving” (p. 4). This tripartite dynamic (self-others, self-self, self-client) of processing personal and therapeutic experiences illustrates how the training helped create a more competent therapeutic self. The experience of these participants demonstrates how the integration of their personal selves with their professional identities was a fundamental outcome of the training process. This was accomplished through the enhanced capacity to establish healthy and adaptive relationships with others and with the self. As a result, participants

experienced a greater link between the emergence of the professional self and their personhood.

Thus, the findings demonstrate how the EA training program supports trainees in integrating interpersonal processes and intrapersonal dynamics through the development process. This leads to a holistic experience for trainees of the overall development process, thereby encouraging the awareness of how personhood can be trained to effectively support the therapeutic process. This contribution shows how the exploration and expansion of awareness pertaining to the personhood of therapist trainees assists in the emergence of the professional self. Cooper (2007) explained how existential approaches seek to integrate personal and professional forms of development by attempting “to help psychotherapists develop an awareness of what they are experiencing in relation to their clients—and how they might share this with clients, if appropriate—as opposed to focusing on clients and their psychological difficulties and diagnoses” (p. 15). The training process of EA operates in accordance with this principle due to the reliance on the use of self as an instrument of therapeutic change. These findings add to the canon of North American training literature in demonstrating how intrapersonal development supports the development of relationship-building skills, or interpersonal development, in trainees. Bassett-Short and Hammel (2008) noted that the existential approach to therapist training can help novice practitioners to overcome “a complicating issue [which] is that armed with the

insights of graduate school, students too often apply their techniques and knowledge to clients instead of working with them in shared endeavors” (p. 24). This can be seen as a strength for the EA approach to therapist training because the development of interpersonal skills can be seen as more a way of being than a form of technical competence.

A final point must be emphasized about the findings and how the theory of EA is integrated into the training process. The four themes of Witnessing, Relating, Personal Development, and Experiential Capacities can be seen to parallel the structure of A. Längle’s (2003) theory on the four fundamental motivations. In line with the experiential nature of the EA training program, the understanding participants expressed about each of themes can be seen to have emerged from trial and error processes they underwent throughout the course of the training program as they experimented with different ways of being in the world. Each of the four themes involved a different ontological component that can be seen in concordance with the structure of the four fundamental motivations. For example, Witnessing emerged out of trainees’ experiments with vulnerability, which accords with the first fundamental motivation, defined by A. Längle (2003) as “the world in its factuality and potentiality” (p. 31). Relating emerged out of trainees’ experiments with intimacy, which accords with the second fundamental motivation, defined by A. Längle (2003) as “life with its network of relationships and its feelings” (p. 31). Personal Development emerged

out of trainees' experiments with personhood, which accords with the third fundamental motivation, defined by A. Längle (2003) as "being oneself as a unique, autonomous person" (p. 31). Finally, Experiential Capacities emerged out of trainees' experiments with immediacy, which accords with the fourth fundamental motivation, defined by A. Längle (2003) as "the wider context in which to place oneself [or] . . . development through one's activities, opening one's future" (p. 31).

This resonance between the findings and the theory of EA is relevant in assessing this study, and there are a couple of possibilities for this similarity. One possibility is that what trainees experienced in terms of their personal and professional development outcomes from the EA training intertwined with the nature of the theoretical material. That is to say, the structure of the theory of EA, and in particular the central developmental role that learning the four fundamental motivations plays in the personal and professional development process, may have led to this concordance between the findings and the theoretical material. However, another possibility could be that I, having personally trained in EA and developed a phenomenological understanding of the four fundamental motivations, might have imported this theoretical understanding as a hidden bias in the process of analyzing the data. Further research is needed on EA trainees' experience in understanding the four fundamental motivations to determine which of these possibilities is more likely.

Clinical Implications

The clinical implications of these findings show that the development of personhood was an important component for the professional development process of the four trainees who participated in this study. They were thus able to develop comfort with revealing their feelings for others to observe while learning to relate to others in a deeper way. The theory of EA was largely learned through a phenomenological approach and a focus on personal experience. This helped trainees gain self-awareness and a sense of presence based on the experiential style of the training program. Through acknowledging personhood as an inherent component of the therapeutic development of trainee therapists, EA supplies the necessary permission to bring previously unacknowledged experiences and emotions into the training process and reframe them in a new light. The findings demonstrate that the emphasis on refining one's personhood dovetails with refining the therapeutic self. Furthermore, training programs that do not encourage self-exploration and self-discovery may inhibit personal qualities of trainees that support the personal and professional development process.

This study highlights the uniqueness of EA's holistic approach to therapist development. Participants described learning to better connect within the overall group context. This included development between individual group members (via interpersonal processes within the group), and development in learning to better relate to self (via awareness of intrapersonal dynamics), and ultimately, this

led to them learning to better relate to clients. Luke and Kiweewa (2010) lent credence to these results, as they found that relationships between the trainees who were part of a long-term experiential therapist process group supported their intrapersonal development. Furthermore, the overall experience that comprised the whole group process was also linked to interpersonal development. Through the iterative process inherent in the EA training program, the four trainees who participated in the current study also found the opportunity to deepen their growth and development as they became emotionally activated in the training, got feedback from others about their perceptions of the experience, and then were able to reflect on how this impacted their experience of self. The emergence of self through this process is essential; furthermore, intrapersonal awareness supports the development of interpersonal skills (Krug, 2009). For these four participants, EA distinguishes itself by combining interpersonal and intrapersonal experiences with the development of personhood and the therapeutic self.

The findings highlight that as an approach to therapist training, EA functions similarly to a process-based therapy group. However, it is distinguished as an approach that combines the benefits of a process-based group therapy experience with the more traditional mainstream forms of therapist approaches to postgraduate training and supervision. Furthermore, the recursive nature of the training process and the interrelated deepening trainees had of their experience of self and others highlights how experiential methods of training can help trainees

integrate theoretical content that might otherwise remain at an abstract level. The interpersonal and intrapersonal themes that emerged from the experience of these trainees might also more broadly apply to the experience of some therapy clients in process-based therapy groups, and this hints at the benefits for group therapists working from a theoretical style that values personal growth and development to be familiar with the phenomenological experience of their clients. A. Längle (2003) succinctly summarized the benefits for trainees of developing their interpersonal and intrapersonal awareness:

There is no 'me' without a 'you'. . . . [B]eing oneself as a person means being in communication—being in a continuous intrapersonal and interpersonal exchange of contents and values. It means fine-tuning the outer with the inner reality and vice versa . . . in that continuous flow which is established by nature between the person and his world. They are inseparably connected and interrelated, in uninterrupted reciprocal action. (p. 28)

Socially Responsible Practice

The value of this type of therapeutic training resides in the experiential nature of the method. Some participants in this study commented on how the focus on self-experience led to a richness and depth that they had not received in other training experiences. This led to a great deal of learning from the experience of others. Value was also seen in the diverse backgrounds that people brought into the training. As a trainee in the program I was constantly amazed at how people from such diverse backgrounds regarding spirituality or religion, geography, and culture could connect and bond through such a personally focused training

process. It seemed that the differences brought depth to the relationships due to the fact that everyone's personal uniqueness was brought out into the open, allowing for deep and meaningful human encounters to occur. As noted by the participants, these types of encounters were transformative, and the participants revealed how changed they were in their perspectives as a result of the depth at which they got to relate to others so dissimilar to themselves. Providing this kind of experience through a rigorous and structured training process can be seen to encourage a sense of social responsibility in trainees due to the transformative nature of being exposed to such diverse perspective in such an intimate way. Understanding more about this process and how trainees felt transformed (i.e., how the training related to the personal growth process) could lead to more awareness of the importance of respect for diversity in the trainee development process. Finally, EA emphasizes the development of the personhood of trainees and thereby forces the therapist into a rigorous self-reflexive process. This reduces the possibility of blind spots, countertransference, or other damaging projections onto the client. It also decentres the therapist from the process and brings the fullness of the relationship and the client into the fore. This reduces the possibility of mishandling client diversity or uniqueness, and instead celebrates these therapeutic possibilities. In short, it enhances the ethical responsibilities of the therapeutic relationship.

Limitations

A primary limitation of this study is noted in the theoretical application of the findings to training programs outside of the humanistic tradition. Training programs outside of this field may not value personal growth and development as a necessary or beneficial component of the therapist training process so the themes that have emerged may not apply at all in these different training contexts. Furthermore, EA is designed as a training program to supplement graduate training. Graduate-level competence is required to complete the EA training program, so EA as a training process is an adjunct for trainees who have already achieved a baseline level of therapeutic competence as opposed to those who are just beginning their professional development journey. There was also a self-selection process (recruitment was done with volunteers), meaning that the trainees who volunteered could have been those who experienced the most personal growth (i.e., those that were most personally and professionally impacted by the training). Due to the qualitative approach used, I decided to interview the first four trainees who responded to my advertisement and met the inclusion criteria. This could have also influenced the findings, as there may be other trainees who had more negative experiences that were not represented in this sample. Due to their ongoing involvement in the training, participants may have also wanted to present the training in the best possible light, which may have made them less likely to talk about negative experiences. There was a question

about challenging experiences in the training and some minor issues were raised. For example, participants tended to share the experience of slightly struggling to learn the theory as a result of the lack of an English translation of the manual. This was described as sometimes leading to feelings of a lack of overall structure, even though this was not described as a major hindrance (and in some cases was even noted to have encouraged a sense of openness to the process). Thus, even challenging experiences of the training were reframed as things that could be seen as opportunities for personal growth and therapeutic development. Whether these experiences reflected the actual experience of participants or were a result of a sense of allegiance to the training program, it is impossible to say. I also had the sole power of interpretation of the data. Therefore, a bias or advocacy position might be present in how the analysis was conducted due to my own sense of allegiance to EA.

Further limitations are found in the fact that the nature of this training process is very unique and therefore the results do not necessarily transfer to different types of training. Participants noted that the depth of relationships with other trainees allowed for a sense of safety that led to feeling that they could risk being vulnerable and not lose face with others. This is something that spontaneously emerged throughout the long-term nature of the training, which means it cannot be forced, and this level of trust might not even be possible in other types of trainings that are more short term (or less experiential, so that

risking something in revealing previously unacknowledged parts of self might not be advised). There may be cultural factors operating due to the fact that all of the trainees took the training in Western Canada. In Canada, participants might be coming out of a particular therapeutic milieu, which influenced the characteristics that emerged as seemingly essential or core parts of the training experience (i.e., there might be different core features of the training in other countries). Also, these participants were already trained as therapists and had worked with clients. Therefore, EA is continuing or subsidiary training that adds to a foundation already present in each participant's professional background.

Finally, I am a strong proponent for EA training as I am currently undergoing the training and therapeutically identify as an existentialist analyst. Thus, I might have imported bias towards advocacy, conceptually and practically, for this particular therapy and its training style.

Future Research

A next stage of research could be done with a larger sample size with more researchers to collaborate on the analysis, as the chosen methodology of IPA was a good fit for the aims of the study, but ended up being a time-consuming process that would have benefitted from more dialogue and other perspectives in the coding and theme generation process. Another investigation that would add to understanding about personal and professional development could involve understanding the experience of therapist development for trainees

who have completed the EA training program and already have a number of years of experience as EA-aligned therapists. Another study could be done with a focus on the impact of the training on client outcome; this would require studying how clients experienced therapy with an EA therapist as compared to another novice clinician from a similar kind of postgraduate training program. Related to this, future research could also look at comparing the experience of trainees in EA as an existential phenomenologically oriented postgraduate training program with the experience of trainees in other postgraduate training programs (e.g., the Satir training program), as well as with postgraduate training programs outside of the humanistic tradition. Another study could be conducted through a focus group made up of participants who have completed training in EA to determine how they felt the themes from this study related to their experience of the training. Another idea would be to compare training populations (e.g., experiences of EA trainees versus those in other long-term trainings). Future research on the personal and professional development process of EA trainees could also be conducted by a more impartial researcher with no knowledge of the theory of EA. This would help assess the validity of the current findings that resonated with the structure of the EA model, because it is unknown how much my knowledge of EA influenced the interpretative process. Finally, the existential trainee development process could benefit from quantitative research that could measure the experience of personal growth and professional development in a more empirical manner.

Conclusion

Existential psychotherapy is an approach that emphasizes the value of the therapist's use of self as an instrument of the client's change process. Existential methods focus on the value of being with a client over doing something to them, understanding a person over explaining behaviour, and experiential awareness over theoretical abstraction (Cooper, 2007; May, 1983; Milton et al., 2003; Yalom, 1980). An essential aspect of EA that makes it a unique therapist training program is that it emphasizes the integration of interpersonal processes with intrapersonal dynamics. The personal is interwoven with the professional in this therapeutic method, so professional development is intimately linked with the personal growth of the trainee. Therefore, EA bridges the divide between the personal and professional development of trainees.

The objective of this study was to explore EA trainees' understanding of the therapist's personal and professional development process. I believe this insider perspective on trainee development contributes to the therapist training literature by increasing understanding about an area that has not been well researched: the emergence of the trainee's personhood through the existential psychotherapist development process.

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Appendix A: Flyer for Training Program

Training in EA (Logotherapy) in Canada – learn an existential approach in psychotherapy

The **International Society for Logotherapy and EA (GLE-International)** and the **International Society for Existential Analytical Psychotherapy (ISEAP)** (both *Vienna, Austria*) are providing a full training in existential analytical psychotherapy and/or counselling in **Vancouver, BC** (mostly located at UBC).

Purpose

The course is considered a complete training program in **existential counselling and psychotherapy**. It is intended for post graduate students and practitioners, but also for students at the end of their university career.

Structure and Duration of the Seminar

The *courses* are divided into two parts:

- a) the **Basic Training Program** (44 days in **2 1/2 years**) and
 - b) the **Clinical Training Program** (36 days in **2 years**).
- a) This **Basic Training Program** consists of **7 seminar blocks of 6 consecutive days** each (42 + 2 admission days). Instruction topics include the theory of personhood, the theory of existence, existential motivations in theory and practice, some general methods and group-self-experience. For getting an intermediate diploma a seminar of 7 days winds up the training. This seminar

consists in diagnostics, further methods, practical training, insight into main diagnosis like anxieties, depression, histrionic disorders, personality disorders, psychosis and treatment of non clinical disturbances. It also includes group supervision of at least 100 hours leading to an *intermediate diploma*: the **Basic Existential Counselling Diploma**.

b) Training for the **Full Existential Psychotherapy Diploma** continues for almost 2 more years (**6 blocks of 6 days each**) with further seminars on clinical theory (psychopathology, aetiology), practice, methods, practical training, group and individual self-experience and supervision.

All our courses are part-time, with a maximum of 20 training days per year, and are designed to be managed alongside current occupations.

Additional Elements of the *Training*

In **addition** to the seminars both diplomas require:

- a) One individual **admissions** interview: CND \$100 and 2 admission days at the beginning of the group.
- b) **Self experience** in individual sessions (min. **30** hours for the Basic Existential Counselling Diploma, a total of min. **50** hours for Full Existential Psychotherapy Diploma.
- c) **Supervision**: *Basic Counselling Diploma*: at least **100** hours (in groups); *Full Existential Psychotherapy Diploma*: at least **150** hours (in groups mostly).
- d) **Practical work**: for the *counselling* diploma at least 200 hours own practical

work; for *Full Existential Psychotherapy Diploma* a **practicum** of 500 hours (e.g. as a guest in a psychiatric clinic or ambulance – most of you may have done this) and at least 600 hours of **own practice** (in public or private locations).

e) A written theoretical or practical **paper project** of at least 20 (Basic Counselling Diploma) or 30 pages (*Full Existential Psychotherapy Diploma*).

Minimum Admission Requirements

Persons possessing (or in a current study of) a master's or doctoral degree in clinical or counselling psychology, social work, medicine, or a related field are encouraged to apply for admission to the full training program. For the basic counselling diploma teachers, theologians and persons with other professional backgrounds are encouraged to apply. Others may apply by a written explanation of their interest. The application will then be evaluated in a personal interview.

A **personal interview** is required for all applicants.

Trainers

Responsible for the whole training: **Alfried Längle, M.D., Ph.D.**

In collaboration with the **European training staff** and **Derrick Klaassen, MA, doctoral student (UBC, Vancouver)**.

For individual sessions (self experience) we will also collaborate with local experienced psychotherapists.

Costs (CAN Dollars)

The seminar day: CAN \$120 (students \$ 80).

One year: is planned with 18 days:

For the **Basic Counselling Diploma**: 45 days seminars in 2 ½ years, plus min. 30 hours individual self-experience, plus 100 hours supervision

For the **Full Existential Psychotherapy Diploma**: 74 days seminars, plus min. 50 hours individual self-experience, plus min. 150 hours supervision

The prices are *within the average range* of comparable training programs. Student *reductions* at the seminars may be available to full-time students.

NO payments are required in advance - you only pay for what you get! NO obligations.

Appendix B: Abstract of Proposed Study



Volunteers Wanted for a Research Study

The Adler School of Professional Psychology

The Lived Experience of Personal and Professional
Development in Existential Analysis

Introduction to the study

This research is being conducted to address the gap in the literature on psychotherapy training regarding the personal development process of trainees. The aim of this study will be to increase understanding about the experience of EA trainees. It is hoped that gaining a better understanding about trainees' experiences of the personal development process involved in this training approach will help bridge the gap in the existing body of literature on trainee development. It is also hoped that empirical data about the process will make the training program more robust while helping future trainees avoid unnecessary struggles while bringing a theoretical perspective to an applied process that has not been well researched.

Participants will be required to meet the following criteria:

1. Participants will be current trainees in a Canadian cohort of EA who have completed at least four seminars.
2. Participants will be at least nineteen years old.
3. Participants will have had an active caseload of clients in either individual or group psychotherapy practice at some point during the EA training.
4. Participants will be able to commit to taking part in a two-hour interview about their views on their personal and professional development as a result of the training as well as a one-hour follow-up interview approximately three months later once the initial analysis has been completed.
5. Participants will be willing and able to complete the interview in English.

In terms of benefits, it is possible that participants may experience a certain degree of increased insight and self-awareness as a result of exploring and articulating their thoughts, emotions and experiences.

For information please contact:

Student-Investigator: Mike Mathers.

Mr. Mathers is undertaking this study for his Master's thesis.

This research is conducted under the direction of:

Faculty Advisor: Asa-Sophia Maglio, MA, RCC

Core Faculty member, Adler School of Professional Psychology

Appendix C: Interview Introduction Script

Thank you for your time today in agreeing to this interview and being a participant in my study. The interview will take no more than 2 hours and please let me know if you need a break at any time. Your participation is completely voluntary so you have the right to end the interview at any point. I may occasionally take some brief notes to keep track of your ideas and this will help me be more present so I hope that it is not too distracting for you. I would now like to review with you some more details about your participation in the study.

(Review Informed Consent form, ask for a synopsis of what was read, answer any questions, and obtain signature if person decides to continue with interview).

Do you have any other questions before we begin?

[start interview]

Appendix D: Telephone Script

Thank you for contacting me regarding my study on personal and professional development as experienced by trainees currently studying EA. My name is Mike Mathers and I am a Masters student in counselling at the Adler School of Professional Psychology and I have also been a trainee in EA since 2007. As you are most likely already aware, there have only been 2 cohorts in North America of primarily English speaking trainees in EA. This study is focused on exploring the development process of trainees and better understanding how trainees have experienced the personal development process in relation to the clinical development process. Before I tell you more about what will be involved if you decide to participate, how confidentiality will be maintained, and other relevant information about the research, I need to ask you some questions:

1. Are you a current trainee in a Canadian cohort of EA who has completed at least four seminars?
2. Are you at least nineteen years old?
3. Have you had an active caseload of clients in either individual or group psychotherapy practice at some point during the EA training? An active caseload is defined as at least one client in individual or group therapy for a minimum of five sessions.

4. Can you commit to taking part in a two-hour interview about your views on your personal and professional development as a result of the training as well as a one-hour follow-up interview approximately three months later?

[If no to any of these five questions] – Thank-you for your interest in my study.

Unfortunately, there are specific criteria that must be satisfied for individuals to be accepted as research participants and you do not meet all of those criteria. I very much appreciate your time and interest in this research.

[If yes to all five questions] – Thank you [continuing with script].

I would now like to tell you more about what would be involved if you decided to participate in the study. Participants will be asked to meet with me for an approximately 2-hour interview that will be audio recorded. Upon completion, I will be transcribing the interviews and I will protect participant's identities by using a numerical code and by removing any personal information that would serve to identify someone. I will aim to ensure that your identity will remain confidential if I were to publish or present any of the information gleaned from conducting the study. I will also keep your name and numerical code information on a separate document that will be stored at my home in a locked box and I will be the only one able to access this. I am keeping track of this information because another part of the research will involve me doing a 1-hour follow-up interview with participants to ensure that any conclusions I draw about the process fit with the participants understanding of it. I would also like you to know that there is no

pressure from the GLE or Alfried Längle for you to be a participant in this research and that participation will not lead to any cost or benefit in terms of your place in the EA training program. Also, even if you agree to participate you can withdraw from the study at any time without the need for further explanation. Finally, I will be sending participants the Informed Consent document via email to review at least 48 hours prior to the scheduled interview. I will also send out a list of the interview questions that will be asked and this will be received at the same time as the Informed Consent.

Do you have any questions about the study based on what I have said or initial flyer/email?

Do you think that you would like to be a participant in this study?

[if yes, time and place for interview will be decided, if no, will thank the individual for their time and interest]

Appendix E: Informed Consent Form



The Lived Experience of Personal and Professional Development in Existential

Analysis

Faculty Advisor: Asa-Sophia Maglio, MA, RCC. Core Faculty member, Adler School of Professional Psychology.

Student-Investigator: Mike Mathers. Mr. Mathers is undertaking this study for his Master's thesis.

Purpose of the study: The purpose of this study is to explore in-depth the unique experiences of trainees currently studying EA. You have been invited to participate in this study because you have identified yourself as a trainee in EA.

Procedure: As a participant, you will be asked to participate in an initial 2-hour interview regarding your experiences of training in EA. This will be followed by a 1-hour follow-up interview at a later date. The interviews will be conducted by Mike Mathers and audio-recorded for transcription. Findings resulting from this research will be published in a completed thesis document. Additionally, these

findings may be presented at a conference or published in a scholarly journal. A brief summary of the findings will be emailed to you, if you would like.

Confidentiality: All personal identifiable information resulting from research will be kept confidential. All research material will be identified only by research code number and kept in a locked filing cabinet at the researcher's home. Participants will not be identified by name in any reports of the completed study. Only Mike Mathers, his research advisor, Asa-Sophia Maglio, and the research assistants (i.e., second coder and/or transcriptionist) will have access to the raw data. In accordance with Adler recommendations, all raw data (i.e., audio files, questionnaires) will be kept for five years after the work is presented. After those five years, data will be destroyed (i.e., professionally shredded and/or erased). It must be noted that confidentiality will be protected by all means and this will include removing or altering any identifying information from the final report, however, due to the small community that participants are being drawn from, confidentiality may not be able to be guaranteed. Through participant checks at the follow-up interview and before the final work is submitted, participants will have control over what information that is included in the final work. In order to mitigate the risk of a potential breach of confidentiality, participants will have the right to refuse any presentation of verbatim extracts or interpretations of themes that emerge from the analysis of their data set.

Risks and Benefits: As a result of revisiting past experiences while participating in this study, there is a minimal risk of participants experiencing some degree of stress. If any stress or discomfort is experienced as a result of participating in the study, participants are invited to speak to the researcher about their concerns so that they may be addressed appropriately.

In terms of benefits, it is possible that participants may also experience a certain degree of increased insight and self-awareness as a result of exploring and articulating their thoughts, emotions and experiences.

Contact: If you have any questions or desire further information with respect to this study, you may contact Mike Mathers, or his research advisor, Asa-Sophia Maglio. If you have any questions or concerns about your treatment as a research participant, you may contact Debbie Clelland, head of the Adler Ethics Board, at dclelland@adler.edu.

Consent: I understand that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. I have read this consent form. I have received a copy of this consent form for my own records. I consent to participate in this study.

Participant Signature Date

Participant Name (Printed)

Participant Email

- I, _____, wish to receive a copy of the study's results, which can emailed to me at the above listed email address.
- I do not wish to receive a copy of the study's results.

Appendix F: Interview Schedule

- 1 Could you start by telling me what your experience of the training has been? (Follow-up prompts – how did it begin / what attracted you to it / what made you want to continue with the commitment i.e. how did you know that the training was for you?)
- 2 How has it differed from other trainings that you have done?
- 3 What have you found to be supportive? What have you found has been an obstacle?
- 4 Can you give examples from your life of how training in Existential Analysis has touched you (Follow up prompts - can you think of one specific example where it impacted you? What was impacted? How did you know? Did other people see this? How did you change? What was the emotional experience of this like for you?)
- 5 Do you feel there are any differences in how you relate to the world as a result of the training? What about how you relate to others or the relationship you have with yourself?
- 6 Now, can you tell me if you about your experience of yourself in sessions with clients? Are there any changes you attribute to be as a result of the training?

Appendix G: Demographic Survey

Thank you for your decision to participate in this research. It is not required for your participation, but would be appreciated if you would be willing to complete the following demographic survey. Please circle the answer you deem most appropriate or fill in the blank, as noted.

1. What is your gender: Male Female

2. What is your age?

25-35

36-45

46-55

56-65

65 or older

3. How long have you been practicing as a counsellor/psychotherapist?

2 years or less

2-5 years

5-10 years

10 years plus

4. How long have you been training in EA for?

5. How would you describe your theoretical orientation or approach to counselling/psychotherapy?

Appendix H: Interview Introduction Script

Thank you for your time today in agreeing to this interview and being a participant in my study. The interview will take no more than 2 hours and please let me know if you need a break at any time. Your participation is completely voluntary so you have the right to end the interview at any point. I may occasionally take some brief notes to keep track of your ideas and this will help me be more present so I hope that it is not too distracting for you. I would now like to review with you some more details about your participation in the study. (Review Informed Consent form, ask for a synopsis of what was read, answer any questions, and obtain signature if person decides to continue with interview).

Do you have any other questions before we begin?

[start interview]

- 1 Could you start by telling me what your experience of the training has been? (Follow-up prompts – how did it begin / what attracted you to it / what made you want to continue with the commitment i.e. how did you know that the training was for you?)
- 2 How has it differed from other trainings that you have done?
- 3 What have you found to be supportive? What have you found has been an obstacle?
- 4 Can you give examples from your life of how training in Existential Analysis has touched you (Follow up prompts - can you think of one

specific example where it impacted you? What was impacted? How did you know? Did other people see this? How did you change? What was the emotional experience of this like for you?)

- 5 Do you feel there are any differences in how you relate to the world as a result of the training? What about how you relate to others or the relationship you have with yourself?
- 6 Now, can you tell me if you about your experience of yourself in sessions with clients? Are there any changes you attribute to be as a result of the training?