The Identity Formation of Psychotherapists in Training: A Dialectical and Personal Process

Liat Tsuman-Caspi

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ABSTRACT

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The primary goal of this study was to investigate how psychotherapists in training develop a professional identity. Specifically, the aims were 1) to generate a theory that could guide thinking about this subject; and 2) to apply the knowledge gained to formulate ideas about the education of future psychotherapists. Twenty-nine doctoral students, recruited primarily in New York and California, were interviewed about their professional development. Qualitative analyses of the transcribed interviews (utilizing multiple methodologies, including the Listening Guide method) revealed normative aspects of, as well as individual differences with respect to, identity formation. Specifically, within a professional and cultural context that poses specific challenges and demands, psychotherapist trainees continuously recreate their identities through the performance of four identity tasks: exploring, committing, feeling, and reflecting. Through engagement in these tasks, trainees develop a distinctive set of skills, ideas, ways of working, and professional attitudes, and a subjective sense of themselves as psychotherapists with a unique therapeutic style and presence. Conceptualized as a dialectical process of differentiation and psychological separation, this process appears to characterize the identity formation of all trainees. Differences in identity formation are conceptualized in terms of trainees’ ability to flexibly shift among identity tasks in response to changing contextual demands and circumstances; this quality is termed fluidity and is seen as the result of the specific and changing interactions between trainees and the professional context within which they develop. Six different approaches to identity formation, termed identity configurations, were identified, reflecting varying levels of engagement in identity tasks. Specifically, two “dialectical identity
configurations” were identified, representing the fluidity of identity that arises from shifts in engaging and coping with changing contextual demands. These dialectical identity configurations also promote the development of a therapeutic repertoire that is unique, reflective of trainees’ abilities and interests, and deeply meaningful. In contrast, four “non-dialectical identity configurations” were identified, representing coping with contextual challenges via a narrow range of relatively invariant responses. As such, these identity configurations are likely to interfere with the development of a therapeutic repertoire that is personal and emotionally resonant. Six case illustrations are presented to exemplify these ideas. Findings are explored in relation to other theories and models in the areas of identity and psychotherapists’ development. In addition, implications of these ideas for training, including specific recommendations, are discussed.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Identities cannot be decontextualized from the social, cultural, and historical contexts in which they are created (Erikson, 1964, 1968). Psychotherapist trainees today are entering the field of psychotherapy and form their professional identities at a time of profound change in both theory and practice. In addition, the broader social and cultural contexts in which they live, learn, and develop pose considerable challenges to identity formation. Research on psychotherapists’ development suggests that the ways in which psychotherapist trainees form their identities while coping with various learning, professional, and developmental challenges have important implications for their engagement in theory, their clinical work, and short- and long-term professional development. Nevertheless, despite the importance of this issue, relatively few studies focus on the training stage of psychotherapists’ professional development, especially from the perspective of identity formation. Accordingly, the primary aim of this study was to investigate how psychotherapists in training develop their identities as psychotherapists within challenging contextual circumstances.

Statement of Problem

Although the field of psychotherapy has been slow to enter the postmodern debate, in the past few decades various elements of postmodern consciousness have influenced the psychotherapy field, leading to profound changes in both theory and practice (Gergen, 2001; Kvale, 1992). Transformations in meta-theory have questioned previously held notions about the objective and absolute nature of psychotherapists’ knowledge, conceiving of that knowledge as relative and constructed (i.e., negotiated within the therapeutic dyad). This shift in thinking has challenged all theoretical schools of psychotherapy, albeit to different degrees, with responses
ranging from empiricism to constructivism (Bertrando, 2000; Caro, 2004; Fergus & Reid, 2002; Gergen, 2001; Legg & Stagaki, 2002; Leitner, 2005; Lyddon, 1995). The current state of the field of psychotherapy has been variously described by authors from different theoretical disciplines as “confronting a dilemma” (Botella, 1998, p. 255), “a Modernist-Postmodernist collage” (Caro, 2004, p. 96), and “in the midst of a great crisis” (Leitner, 2005, p. 305). Students of psychotherapy are exposed to these intellectual debates and various ways of thinking through classes, books, personal encounters with professionals, and living in the world, absorbing the ideas and spirit of the time. When attempting to define their belief system or develop a way of working therapeutically, therapist trainees today inevitably face broader questions about the nature of therapeutic knowledge and, consequently, of the therapist’s authority (Mitchell, 1993). Regardless of whether they are actively and consciously engaging in such questions at this early stage of their development, the field in which they are learning requires tolerating considerable uncertainty and ambiguity (Skovholt and Rønnestad, 2003a; Stern, 1997).

The proliferation of theoretical approaches and treatment modalities in recent decades (Barlow, 2006; Felix & Akhtar, 2004) creates further complexity and confusion, as psychotherapist trainees are faced with the challenging task of theoretical and technical integration (Hansen, 2002; Lowndes, & Hanley, 2010). Research on psychotherapy outcome supports the use of multiple treatment modalities, indicating that different clients and circumstances require different interventions (Grissom, 1996; Kopta, Lueger, Saunders, & Howard, 1999). In addition, working in increasingly pluralistic societies, psychotherapists encounter considerable human diversity, and thus are required to continuously learn about the experiences of multicultural groups and to adapt their ways of working and therapeutic assumptions accordingly (Brown, 2011; Utsey, Fischer, & Belvet, 2010; Whaley & Davis, 2007).
Moreover, worldwide developments, such as global communication and advanced technology, which have dramatically changed previously known forms of communication and relatedness (Gergen, 1991; Turkle, 2005, 2011), have penetrated the field of psychotherapy, leading it to revisit and at times redefine its fundamental assumptions, ideas, and therapeutic interventions (Leong & Ponterotto, 2003; Nutt, 2007). In my view, the fast pace of these changes in particular poses challenges for identity formation, as the theory of psychotherapy is lagging behind the phenomena that psychotherapists encounter in practice (Polkinghorne, 1992).

Beyond the particular current professional and cultural circumstances described above, psychotherapy work in its mission to alleviate human suffering is, while tremendously satisfying, a complex, ambiguous, demanding, and often frustrating, activity, requiring various intellectual, emotional, and interpersonal skills (Farber & Heifetz, 1981, 1982; Orlinsky & Rønnestad, 2005; Skolnikoff, 1996). The challenges presented by the current psychotherapy field, and clinical work, are particularly intensified for psychotherapists in training who have limited clinical experience and who understandably experience considerable self-doubt (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003a; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003b; Yourman, 2003). The multiple and varied demands of training, which typically involves academic, research, and clinical components, add additional stressors (Lowndes & Hanley, 2010; Rønnestad & Skovholt, 1993; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003a).

What are the implications of these challenging circumstances for the identity formation of psychotherapists in training? How do trainees who are new to the psychotherapy field make identity choices when they are faced with multiple options for identification, alongside a growing awareness that there is no one right way to go about it? Do they engage with or avoid the challenge of integration? How do psychotherapists in general, and trainees’ in particular, respond
to the continually changing needs and presenting issues of clients of diverse backgrounds? What kind of identities emerge in this context and by what process?

At a time when defining oneself and the type of psychotherapy one practices can be a complex and ambiguous task, reflecting about one’s profession and clinical work is an essential undertaking (Botella, 1998; Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003). This is especially true for psychotherapist trainees for whom questions of professional development and identity are all the more pressing. However, despite the increasing awareness in the field of the importance of greater self-reflexivity and developing strategies for integration (Orlinsky & Rønnestad, 2005; Richert, 2006), training programs in the United States do not yet systematically guide students through these challenges, leaving trainees to struggle with them mostly by themselves (Castonguay, 2000; Lhulier, 2005). The extent to which the next generation of psychotherapists deals with these issues constructively may have important implications for clinical practice and theory.

Indeed, research examining trainees’ clinical work and experience has highlighted the need for continued attention to the training environment and the challenges new psychotherapists face within that environment. Specifically, it has been found that a poor balance between novice psychotherapists’ skills and their frustration with clinical work may negatively influence both clinical work and psychotherapists’ immediate and long-term development (Farber & Heifetz, 1982; Orlinsky & Rønnestad, 2005; Rønnestad and Skovholt, 2003). In contrast, trainees who find the demands of training manageable engage in less avoidance coping and are more likely to approach the task of learning openly and effectively (Kuyken, Peters, Power, & Lavender, 2003).
With respect to theory, the discrepancy between the demand to adhere to multiple therapeutic approaches and the lack of mechanisms for integration of these approaches may lead psychotherapist trainees to avoid attempts at integration or to disengage from theory altogether (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003). This process can in turn have negative effects on clinical work, which is known to benefit from psychotherapists’ breadth of clinical knowledge. Regardless of level of development, psychotherapists who bring a broader array of theoretical perspectives to their practice are more likely to experience their clinical work as successful and inherently rewarding, are better able to flexibly respond to the varying challenges that clients present, and report greater professional development (Orlinsky & Rønnestad, 2005). It has also been noted that psychotherapists’ difficulty bridging the gap between theoretical perspectives and participating in a mutual and constructive dialogue can result in the seclusion of theoretical schools, and consequently, in intellectual isolation and rigidity (Kernberg, 2000). Finally, the proliferation of theoretical models, allegiances to specific camps of thought, and ongoing forms of intellectual rigidity—which together contribute to ambiguity in clinical concepts and diagnostic categories and to the use of inaccurate or outdated concepts—can lead to trainees’ confusion around current trends in theory (Lhulier, 2005). The at times overwhelming challenge to position themselves comfortably with respect to theory and current thinking might deter new psychotherapists from participating in theoretical discourse, leading to stagnation in clinical theory.

Significance of Study

The findings produced by this study can benefit the field of psychotherapy in several ways. First, gaining further insight into the challenges psychotherapist trainees currently face in pursuit of a professional identity, the ways in which they form identities in the face of those
challenges, and the role of training in promoting or curtailing effective coping, would allow training institutes and supervisors to better respond to trainees’ needs (e.g., by helping trainees develop sophisticated ways of coping with the stresses of clinical work, teaching trainees how to integrate different theoretical perspectives, and encouraging self-reflection and active engagement in their professional development). As noted above, helping trainees negotiate the demands of training and clinical work more effectively can have a positive impact on their clinical work and short- and long-term professional development.

Secondly, as the practice of psychotherapy becomes increasingly complex and demanding, and as psychotherapists are required to continuously adjust and at times redefine their ways of working and conceptualizing, it is essential that psychotherapists turn their critical skills inward and engage in serious self-reflection. To remain relevant in a constantly changing world, in my view, psychotherapists as individuals and the psychotherapy profession are required to constantly engage in questions of identity. In an introductory paper to a special issue on psychotherapist and counselors’ career development, Skovholt and Rønnestad (2003b) note that

It is perhaps ironic that like “the shoemaker who has no shoes” counselors have neglected research on their own life-long career development. The urgency to do so has now grown given the research on the importance of the counselor/therapist’s contribution to (psychotherapy) outcome and the great variability results obtained by between different counselors and therapists. (p. 2)

The current study seeks to contribute to that effort by focusing on psychotherapist trainees as its object of study and on the ways in which they engage with complex social and cultural processes and the resultant professional demands as they develop their identities.

Finally, since the boundaries between psychotherapists’ professional and personal identities are not clearly demarcated (Farber & Golden, 1997; Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992a), the trajectories of psychotherapists’ professional identity
formation may be reflective of the larger issue of identity formation in contemporary culture. The present study could potentially contribute to an understanding on a broader level of how people engage in the task of identity formation at a time of accelerated social changes, multiple identifications, and great ambiguity. Learning about the ways in which psychotherapists deal with these challenges may inform psychotherapists about their clients’ engagement in the very same questions of identity.
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

My purpose in this chapter is to critically review the literature that pertains to the identity formation of psychotherapists in training. I begin by describing the context in which the professional identities of psychotherapist trainees are developed—the field of psychotherapy and the larger cultural context in which it is embedded. I then present several theories of identity, followed by a critical review of the research on professional development of psychotherapists in training. I hope that this review will demonstrate the need for further research in this area.

The Psychotherapy Field and the Postmodern World

Identities cannot be meaningfully understood without consideration of the context in which they are created. This is especially true, in my view, for the identities of psychotherapists, who not only learn and develop in a given context, but whose work fundamentally involves engagement with broader socio-cultural, historical, and political processes (Altman, 2010; Bodnar, 2004; Israelashvili & Benjamin, 2009). Whether psychotherapists in training actively and deliberately struggle with these issues, they undoubtedly respond to them and are organized by them, certainly when conducting psychotherapy. Accordingly, I examine the contemporary field of psychotherapy, and specifically the kind of challenges it poses for psychotherapist trainees’ as they develop their professional identities, in the context of a postmodern consciousness.

Whereas the term “postmodernism” has occupied an influential place in academic discourse as a designation of a series of theoretical and epistemological claims or positions, some writers have employed the term “postmodernity” to refer to a series of socio-historical developments (Dunn, 1998; Kvale, 1992). In discussing the contemporary professional context within which psychotherapist trainees develop, this discussion differentiates between
“postmodernism as theory” and “postmodernity as context.” Postmodernism as a theory can inform us about the way in which clinical theories and knowledge are constructed, which in turn impacts practice; postmodernity as a context refers to the social and cultural conditions under which the field of psychotherapy, and psychotherapists, function.

Postmodernism as Theory

The modern assumptions of individual knowledge, objectivity, and truth that have been central to the common practices of psychology have been seriously challenged by the texts of postmodernism, leading to profound changes in the profession in terms of research, theory, and practice (Botella, 1998; Gergen, 2001; Polkinghorne, 1992). Within the modernist tradition, individual knowledge occupies a central role; through the human mind’s capacity for reason, human beings can move progressively toward a better future. Furthermore, it is believed that the world is composed of fixed and knowable entities, that reality exists independently of the observer, and that reality can be known with objective certainty if the right means are used.

Within the modernist tradition, then, mental processes are presumed to follow rules of cause and effect and to be available for objective study through the experimental method—a systematic, rational method that is superior to all other methods (Danziger, 1990/1994). Appropriately, the image of the machine is an appealing metaphor in modern science (Gergen, 1991). Language as the means to convey the objective content of the mind, achieved through rational examination, becomes the bearer of truth—an array of words and explanations that matches the world as it is (Gergen, 2001).

In contrast, the term “postmodern” does not designate a systematic theory or a comprehensive philosophy, but rather diverse interpretations and observations of cultural phenomena (Kvale, 1992). The postmodern outlook privileges multiple pathways for
constructing knowledge and thus undermines the notion of technology and rational science as the sole means by which human beings move progressively towards a better world (Gergen, 1991; Shotter, 1992). The notion of the superiority of individual rationality is seen through postmodern eyes as problematic, if not oppressive. Rather than accepting one form of rationality or description over another, there is a shift to a communal rhetoric whereby people participate in different discourses by adopting the codes of discourse that are particular to that community. Similarly, within the postmodern text, the modernist perception of a person is not an objective description of what is there, but rather a way to think about people that is the direct result of a particular tradition. That is, the modern view of the person is but one way of participating in a particular textual genre. Similarly, language is understood to gain its meaning through ongoing forms of interaction within human relationships (Lovlie, 1992). Thus, rather than generating absolute truths, language creates local truths that are relevant to the particular culture or tradition within which they are formed.

These shifts in consciousness, which have been evident in almost all intellectual disciplines, have also influenced the ideas and practice of the psychotherapy field, creating a state of paradigmatic transition to which different schools of thought have responded to different degrees. The most notable influence of this epistemological change can be discerned in psychoanalysis, which has undergone a fundamental redefinition in terms of the basic questions it attempts to answer (Eagle, 2009; Hoffman, 1991; Mitchell, 1993; Spence, 1982). Rather than being concerned primarily with questions about human motivation or the structure of the mind, it engages in questions about the nature of the psychotherapist’s knowledge. The transition from the view that the analyst knows “the truth” about the client to the notion that he or she knows one or more truths out of many possible truths has created a “crisis of confidence” in psychoanalytic
theory (Mitchell, 1993, p. 42). Mitchell (1993) identifies three major responses to this crisis in meta-theory within psychoanalysis: *empiricism*, the turning to empirical research, which is external to the analytic process, in order to provide a firmer ground for analytic knowledge; *phenomenology*, which tends to underestimate the importance of the analyst’s theory in the analytic process in favor of the client’s experience; and *hermeneutics/constructivism*, \(^1\) which continues to assign importance to the analyst’s knowledge but attempts to redefine the nature of this knowledge. This last approach, the most elaborate strategy within psychoanalysis for dealing with this epistemological crisis, is the subject of a wide and complex discourse among many theorists, encompassing many points of view. Its main assumption is that the client’s experience—the material with which psychoanalysis engages—is inherently ambiguous (Stern, 1997). To understand one’s experience means to organize it. According to this perspective, we know about the reality outside us through our own experience of it, which is organized according to our ideas, assumptions, and wishes. Accordingly, the knowledge produced in therapy is inevitably the result of the experiences of both client and analyst. This shift from absolute truth as “discovered” to local truth as “co-constructed” has, in psychoanalytic thinking and in relational psychoanalysis in particular, translated to a change in emphasis from the curative power of insight to the mutative power of the analytic relationship (Wallerstein, 1998). The change from a one-person psychology to a two-person psychology brings the psychotherapist’s self to the fore, thus making questions of professional identity all the more important.

In contrast to the prevalence of constructivist/hermeneutic approaches in psychoanalysis, the theory of psychopathology and behavior change underlying cognitive therapy seems to be

\(^1\) This term has been used by different authors synonymously with constructionist, hermeneutics, postmodern, discursive, post-rationalist, narrative, and perspectivism (Bottela, 1998; Mitchell, 1993).
incompatible with a postmodern perspective on the human condition. Contemporary forms of cognitive therapy (including cognitive-behavioral therapy), despite their diverse theoretical and epistemological underpinnings, tend to explain psychological difficulties in terms of the causative influence of cognitive processes (Hammack, 2003). Such processes are viewed as being distinct from their social, economic, and political contexts (Caro, 2004). Nevertheless, in the past decade, cognitive therapy has evolved towards postmodernism, with more writers challenging its positivistic tenets on the grounds of their failure to recognize the degree to which reality is socially constituted, and for underplaying the role of social and contextual variables in various forms of psychological disturbance (Lyddon, 1995). Along with models that are closer to a modernist perspective, such as restructuring and cognitive-behavioral models, in the past two decades constructionist and narrative approaches to cognitive therapy have emerged (Caro, 2004). Such approaches view the individual who comes to therapy as changing from one context to another, but as still maintaining some degree of consistency. In contrast to the “modern” self in cognitive therapy who aims towards a better and more rational theory of reality, the “postmodern” individual works in therapy towards the production of local meanings that would provide him or her with greater self-acceptance. In narrative approaches, for instance, the narrative or “story,” is the central organizing principle for understanding one’s experience and the means by which one attains a feeling of unity and historical continuity (Lyddon, 1995).

In humanistic and existential psychology as well, authors who write from these perspectives engage in epistemological questions, attempting to redefine their theoretical position in the face of new developments in the field (e.g., the scientific movement of empirically-validated treatments on the one hand and constructivist perspectives on the other; Leitner, 2005). The current zeitgeist in psychology has also profoundly affected family therapy,
forcing it to adapt its theory and practice to the postmodernist worldview of its practitioners and clients and to engage in questions of legitimacy, functionality, and authority (Legg & Stagaki, 2002; Linares, 2001). In the past two decades, various forms of family therapy have evolved, with the systemic model being replaced by or integrated with narrative and constructivist approaches (Bertrando, 2000; Fergus & Reid, 2002).

The impact of postmodernist consciousness on various schools of thought in psychotherapy suggests a growing schism in the psychology field between psychologists who see themselves as primarily scientists and those who view themselves as practitioners. Specifically, whereas the science of psychology is largely a project of modernity and has continued to operate mostly under the post-positivist tradition, emphasizing external legitimization, practitioners have developed a separate system of knowledge generation closer to postmodernist conceptions, based on the direct service of clients and focused on pragmatic action (Kvale, 1992; Polkinghorne, 1992).

This growing tension between research and practice is brought sharply to the fore by the movement toward empirically-supported treatments (ESTs; and to a lesser extent, evidence-based practice)\(^2\) in psychotherapy. The EST movement is embedded in a medical model of psychotherapy and emphasizes the empirical demonstration of specific psychotherapies’ efficacy for specific disorders. This development, which Prochaska and Norcross (2007) consider to be one of the most important professional issues of the decade, has stirred a heated debate in the

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\(^2\) Empirically-supported treatments (ESTs) are different from evidence-based practice (EBP). Evidence-based practice is the integration of research with clinical expertise in the context of the client’s characteristics, culture, and preferences. Empirically-supported treatments are treatments with at least two randomized controlled clinical trials that demonstrate their efficacy. This is a very rigorous standard, and the APA policy on evidence-based practice allows for less stringent evidence (APA, 2005). Since EBP allows for various kinds of evidence besides randomized, controlled trials, it is usually considered less stringent and less controversial than ESTs (Castelnuovo, Faccio, Molinari, Nardone, & Salvini, 2004).
field of psychotherapy, especially in clinical psychology (Cummings, 2006; Thomason, 2010; Wampold, 2001).

Proponents of the EST movement tend to view clinical psychology as a science and thus consider ethical practice to be one that is informed by established scientific and professional knowledge of the discipline, using techniques and modalities that are grounded in theory and/or have an empirical or scientific foundation. In addition, advocates decry the proliferation of new techniques that have little if any evidence for their safety or efficacy (Thomason, 2010) and welcome ESTs for their clear guidelines on what works for clients (Kivlighan, 2008). On more pragmatic grounds, there are those who see this development as unavoidable, since increasing pressure of third-party payers for more accountability requires that psychotherapists prove the effectiveness of their treatments if they expect reimbursement for their services (Prochaska & Norcross, 2007).

The EST movement has been met with considerable criticism by both practitioners and psychotherapy researchers for various reasons. Opponents have raised concerns about the medicalization of psychotherapy, pointing to the undermining of long-term psychotherapy and the excessive focus on symptom reduction at the expense of self-actualization and perceived improvement in quality of life (Fensterheim & Raw, 1996; Herbert, 2003). Others undermine the legitimacy of empirical epistemologies in general, and randomized clinical trials in particular, as methods for evaluating psychotherapies (Bohart, O'Hara, & Leitner, 1998; Frank & Frank, 1993; Hunsberger, 2007). In a related note, concerns have been raised about the economic consequences of defining a list of ESTs for theoretical paradigms that “embrace epistemologies based on personal experience rather than controlled data” (Herbert, 2003, p. 415; Beutler, 1998; Duncan, 2002; Goldfried & Wolfe, 1996; Starcevic, 2003). Critics also caution against the
potentially stagnating impact of this movement, pointing out that clinical trials can only evaluate currently existing treatments, not develop new and better ones (Jacobson & Christensen, 1996), and noting its power to constrain practitioners’ search for new ways of working with diverse clients (Hansen, 2006).

Beyond being part of the larger community of psychotherapists and thus exposed to its controversies, trainees encounter the tension between the science and the practice of psychotherapy more directly in their training programs, which are typically informed by the scientist-practitioner model and combine research and clinical components. Throughout their training, psychotherapy students interact with a variety of training figures (e.g., researchers, outside instructors, clinical supervisors) who hold different notions of what valid knowledge is and of the desired relationship between theory, research, and practice. Even if trainees do not actively attempt at this early stage in their career to position themselves theoretically and formulate their professional worldview, the exposure to such a variety of perspectives in itself can be overwhelming and confusing (Hill, Charles, & Reed, 1981; Lowndes & Hanley, 2010). Moreover, through their actual encounters with clients, trainees are inevitably and continuously challenged to examine the various ideas and theories they learn, which at times are not relevant or do not sit well with their actual clinical experience (Polkinghorne, 1992).

Postmodernity as Context

Several characteristics of postmodernity as socio-cultural conditions within which the field of psychotherapy operates are relevant to the subject of identity formation. One such characteristic is the embeddedness of the postmodern individual in multiple contexts and his or her affiliations with various, sometimes contradictory, groups (Gergen, 1991). With respect to psychotherapy, this aspect of the postmodernist world is most notable in the proliferation of
theoretical perspectives (Felix & Akhtar, 2004; Gabbard & Westen, 2003; Hansen, 2002). These days, case conceptualizations cannot be separated from the theoretical context in which they are constructed; the same clinical material can be approached from multiple theoretical perspectives, all appealing, complex, and rational within their own terms (Mitchell, 1993). Moreover, whereas 50 years ago one could speak about the differences between several main schools of thought (typically psychoanalytic, humanistic, existentialistic, systemic, cognitive, behavioral, and interpersonal perspectives), today each approach has become a general term for a more complex discourse among many different authors with differing ideas. Within psychoanalysis alone, where there was once a single Freudian form of therapy, is now a rich heterogeneity of theories. As Mitchell (1993) notes, “psychoanalysis theory [can be seen] as a group of interpretive systems, each with its own principles, laws, and criteria of verifiability” (p. 47). Accordingly, psychotherapists today through their theoretical identifications become members of various, at times conflicting, groups, thereby assuming different (theoretical) identities.

This change in the structure and complexity of theory has led to a change in practice. Current and future generations of psychotherapists are introduced to a variety of treatment models and techniques, ranging from manual-based treatments to different analytic techniques, and consequently are faced with the challenge of theoretical and technical eclecticism/integration (Botella, 1998; Goldfried, Glass, & Arnkoff, 2011; Hansen, 2002). Indeed, for the past three decades, an eclectic/integrative approach to psychotherapy has been the most common theoretical orientation in the United States, and many articles and books have been written about the topic of theoretical integration (Norcross, Karpiak, & Lister, 2005). Gabbard and Westen (2003), describing contemporary psychoanalysis as marked by a pluralism unparalleled in prior eras, argue that clinicians can no longer exclusively rely on one main therapeutic action and
suggest a need for greater flexibility in employing different theoretical models and techniques. Pine (1998) also states that it is no longer useful to rely on a single mode of therapy, and that the mechanism of change should be adapted to the specific characteristics of client and psychotherapist. Research on psychotherapy also suggests that there is no one treatment modality that is superior to all (Budd & Hughes, 2009; Norcross, 1995), and many experts in the area of psychotherapy research argue that research should focus on the specific effects of specific psychotherapies on specific types of clients (Grissom, 1996; Kopta et al., 1999).

Supporting the need to manage multiple theories and techniques is the increasingly multicultural, multilingual, and pluralistic nature of Western societies, another prominent feature of postmodernity (Lifton, 1999). In psychotherapy this manifests in the considerable human diversity that psychotherapists encounter in practice (Brown, 2011). The field of psychotherapy has been slow to engage with multicultural issues and, from the standpoint of many members of marginalized groups, has come but a little ways in its understanding of diversity (Hansen, 2010; Sue at al., 1982). Nevertheless, the past several decades have seen a growing recognition of the need to integrate multicultural awareness into practice\(^3\) and a development of methods, concepts, and services that are appropriate to the life experiences of various multicultural\(^4\) groups (Brown, 2011; Hansen, 2010; Johnson, Bastien, & Hirschel, 2009; Utsey, Fischer, & Belvet, 2010; Whaley & Davis, 2007). In addition, attention in recent years has been expanded to examining diversity among psychotherapists (Gelso, 2010),\(^5\) looking at the unique contributions of both

\(^3\) The APA issued guidelines for providers of psychological services, calling them to integrate multicultural and culture-specific awareness, knowledge, and skills into psychotherapeutic interactions (APA, 1993).

\(^4\) The term multiculturalism refers to “aspects of identity stemming from gender, sexual orientation, disability, socioeconomic status, or age. Multiculturalism, in an absolute sense, recognizes the broad scope of dimensions of race, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, gender, age, disability, class status, education, religious/spiritual orientation, and other cultural dimensions.” (APA, 2002).

\(^5\) The journal *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research, Practice, Training* devoted a special issue to the topic of diversity of psychotherapists (2010, Vol. 47, No. 2).
psychotherapist and client. Accordingly, psychotherapist trainees today learning the trade of psychotherapy have to develop competence working with diversity and multiculturalism, further underscoring the need for breadth of knowledge, flexible use of multiple treatment perspectives, and continuous learning.

Finally, the accelerated technological changes in recent decades and the accompanying social saturation (Gergen, 1991) create further challenges for psychotherapist trainees as they attempt to develop a way of working therapeutically and define their roles as psychotherapists. Specifically, the past two decades have seen a proliferation of new forms of communication (e.g., email, text messaging, Skype, Twitter, social networks) that transcend physical boundaries, changing the way people relate to each other and define themselves (Gergen, 1991; Turkle, 2005). This in turn challenges psychotherapists to reconsider old ideas regarding therapeutic space and boundaries (Clough & Casey, 2011; David, 2010). In addition, assumptions about the shared understanding of various self and interpersonal experiences, such as “privacy,” “friendship,” and “authenticity,” have to be reconsidered, as new forms of connectedness change and undermine previously held meanings (Turkle, 2011). As I noted, what is particularly challenging, in my view, is the fast pace of these changes, creating increasingly growing gaps between practice and theory (and between the younger generation and psychotherapists), as the latter struggle to keep up. In a constantly changing world, psychology as a field and

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6 Examples include the use of emails and Skype to conduct psychotherapy under certain circumstances; the ability of clients to search (and find) information on their psychotherapists online (and psychotherapists’ ability to do the same).

7 For example, the popular social network Facebook uses the terms “friend” and “privacy” in ways that can be incongruent with how we typically define them. For instance, a user could have 1000 “friends” whom he has never met, yet would have no one to talk to in person. Similarly, users can decide to keep certain contexts on their profile “private,” opening them “only” to their closest 100 friends. In addition, allowing users to create profiles and share certain aspects of themselves raises interesting questions about identity and authenticity. Similarly, using Twitter (an online social networking and microblogging service that enables its users to send and read text-based posts of up to 140 characters), people share with the world what used to be private experiences, such as what they had for breakfast or, by sharing a photo, a funny image they encountered on the street.
psychotherapists as practitioners have to be ready to continuously revisit old assumptions, consider gaps in understanding, and reinvent themselves and their theories as the experiences and concerns of their clients change and develop; future psychotherapists should be prepared to deal with problems that are currently unimaginable. Botella (1998), in reflecting on this issue, argues that this preparation cannot come from a “handbook approach” (p. 255) but rather from a profound personal reflection on the principles that guide psychotherapists’ professional activities beyond particular cases.

In summary, psychotherapist trainees today enter the psychotherapy field at a time characterized by transformations in meta-theory regarding the nature of psychotherapeutic knowledge and, consequently, of the psychotherapist’s authority. They must also contend with considerable theoretical and technical pluralism, a growing awareness of the need to respond to the unique needs of diverse groups, and accelerated technological and social changes that require continuous reflection on psychotherapeutic assumptions and interventions. Under these challenging circumstances and through interactions with their training and larger environment, psychotherapist trainees develop their identities as psychotherapists.

Identity, Self, and Personality – Definitions and Distinctions

The constructs of identity, self, and personality are commonly used in clinical theory and research (and in popular discourse), though often without clear definitions. While we all understand the meanings of these terms when we use them or read about them, the attempt to define them and draw clear distinctions is challenging.\(^8\) The issue is further complicated by the

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\(^8\) As an example, in a book of almost 1000 pages devoted to personality, *Handbook of Personality Psychology* (Hogan, Johnson, & Briggs, 1997), I was able to find only one definition of the construct of personality made by Allport in 1937 in a chapter reviewing the history of personality psychology (McAdams, 1997). In addition, there was no entry in the index for definition of personality.
fact that there are multiple perspectives on each of these constructs (e.g., a notion of unified and coherent self/identity/personality versus the idea of multiple selves/identities), thereby leading to different understandings of their respective similarities and differences. In what follows I will briefly review existing definitions of these terms and present my definitions, which have guided this inquiry.

**Self versus Identity**

In Western culture the emergence of the concept of “self” preceded that of the concept of “identity” and is commonly traced to the early modern people (roughly 1500-1800), when interest in the characteristics that make a person unique arose. The concept of identity is attributed to Erik Erikson, who coined the term identity crisis in the 1940s; however, its immediately wide usage suggested that the phenomenon it defined was already subjectively familiar (Baumeister, 1997).

In the psychological literature the terms of “self” and “identity” have been used extensively and often interchangeably (Bosma & Kunnen, 2001); most definitions, if attempted at all, tend to be general and abstract, making no clear distinctions between the two (Côté & Levine, 2002). One general distinction made by Côté and Levine (2002) is their theoretical origin. The study of self and the study of identity in psychology have followed two related, and at times overlapping, paths. The study of the self, which has emerged primarily within self-psychology, tends to utilize “self” terms and to focus on processes of self-maintenance; the study of identity, which has emerged primarily within developmental psychology, tends to utilize “identity” terms and to emphasize the process of identity formation in the transition to adulthood (Bosma & Kunnen, 2001; Côté & Levine, 2002).
Identity is both process and content-based (Marcia, 1993); it refers to how experience is handled as well as to what experiences are considered important. With respect to psychotherapist trainees, ‘identities’ include the different ways in which trainees use their experiences and act on them (i.e., process), as well as the specific identifications they adopt and commitments they make at a particular time (i.e., content). My focus in this study is more on the process by which identities are created.

If identity can be simply described as one’s idea of who one is, how one self-defines (with both conscious and unconscious elements), the construct of self can be loosely defined as that part of the person that knows and experiences reality (Harter, 1993). Baumeister (1997) defines self and identity as follows:

The term *self*… encompasses the direct feeling each person has of privileged access to his or her own thoughts and feelings and sensations. It begins with the awareness of one’s body and is augmented by the sense of being able to make choices and initiate actions. It also encompasses the more complex and abstract constructions that embellish the self. (p. 681)

Identity refers to the definitions that are created for and superimposed on the self… Identity can be analyzed as consisting of an interpersonal aspect (a set of roles and relationships), a potentiality aspect (a concept of who the person might become), and a values aspect (a set of values and priorities)… Identity is thus the product of the many definitions of self that exist. (p. 681)

Baumeister seems to associate the self with the individual’s bodily and subjective experience and to understand identity as pertaining more to the aspect of self-definition. While he attempts to clearly delineate the two constructs, there is still, I feel, some residual ambiguity. This testifies, in my view, to the fact that these are constructs we create to make sense of complex experiences that cannot be clearly distinguished.

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9 Baumeister (1997) further states that identity differs from self-concept—“the totality of inferences that a person has made about himself or herself” (p. 681)—in that it is socially defined, whereas self-concept is entirely contained in the person’s mind. I disagree with this distinction, as I understand self-concept to be very much impacted by early relationships and to change from one relational context to another, and in that sense to be similarly socially defined.
Personality psychology became an identifiable discipline in the social sciences in the 1930s. Allport’s publication of the book, *Personality: A Psychological Interpretation* (1937), marked its formal arrival (McAdams, 1997). Allport (as cited in McAdams, 1997) defined personality as “the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his unique adjustment to his environment.” He later changed “unique adjustment to his environment” to “characteristic behavior and thought.”

While there are many theories of personality, overall the construct of personality refers to the characteristic patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that make a person unique. It is a holistic concept, focusing on the whole person as the unit of study (McAdams, 1997). Different theoretical models assume different motivations and factors shaping personality (e.g., within psychoanalysis, drive theory versus relational theory).

Reviewing the history of the concept of personality, McAdams (1997) notes the emergence of self-psychology as a renewed emphasis on the whole person in contemporary psychology (following a decline in popularity), thereby subsuming the self under the personality category. Moreover, the book, *Handbook of Personality* (1997), a comprehensive volume that examines the subject of personality from various perspectives, contains several chapters about self and identity, suggesting their inclusion under the broader category of personality.

McCrae and Costa (1997) state that while personality can be defined in many ways, the fact that most research on personality focuses on traits as reflecting consistent patterns of thoughts, feelings, and actions suggests their centrality in personality. The authors view traits as dynamic and interactive, predisposing individuals to select certain situations or to evoke certain
actions and reactions in others. They also see traits as determinants of the sense of identity (McCrea & Costa, 1989), linking personality and identity.

My thinking about personality is consistent with the relational perspective in psychoanalysis, which understands personality structure as constructed through the individual’s (with his or her constitutional ‘givens’) relationships with others (Mitchell, 1988; Skolnick & Warshaw, 1992). It is a view of personality that is fundamentally dyadic, interactive, and multiple; the individual’s personality is conceptualized as including various and complex patterns of interacting and being in the world—internal representations of self and other—that are rooted in early relational patterns. Such different self-experiences (different “personalities”) are associated with and called for by different relational contexts that are evocative of early relationships.

Based on my extensive reading of psychoanalytic writing, it is my impression\(^{10}\) that there is no clear distinction between self and personality and that the two concepts tend to be used interchangeably. The construct of identity appears to have a more narrow usage, typically in the context of meaning-construction, but is often used interchangeably with the concept of self.

**Summary and Conclusions**

I think of personality as the most encompassing construct referring to the individual’s characteristic patterns of being and relating, including behaviors, emotions, and attitudes, all of which influence identity formation. This is consistent with the literature on psychotherapists’ professional development, in which the construct of personality is typically used to refer to

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\(^{10}\) I have not been able to find writing from a psychoanalytic perspective attempting to make distinctions between these concepts. When I asked a psychoanalytical theorist who has written extensively on the issue of multiple selves and dissociation, she was not able to refer me to relevant literature.
preexisting structures and patterns that impact psychotherapists’ development (Klein, Bernard, & Schermer, 2011; Tremblay, Herron, & Schultz, 1986). Accordingly, in the following discussions I will use the term personality as it is commonly used in popular language to refer to the preexisting patterns that make individuals who they are. I assume that the ways in which psychotherapist trainees develop their identities as psychotherapists are impacted by their personalities.

I view self and identify as interrelated concepts that touch on somewhat different aspects of experience, emphasizing bodily/subjective experience and self-definition, respectively. Both represent in my view ways to organize experience and as such are intertwined. Accordingly, in thinking and writing I have used both “identity” and “self,” at times interchangeably at other times selectively depending on the context. I tend to refer to the construct of self when I focus on the subjective experience of being a psychotherapist, and to use identity to describe the process of self-definition.

I chose to focus in this chapter on the identity literature,\textsuperscript{11} which in its emphasis on self-definition carries more relevance to this study than self theories, which tend to have a mental health angle. In what follows, the theory of identity will be briefly discussed, with a focus on identity formation from both modern and postmodern perspectives. Then, informed by the identity discussion, and as a bridge to the following discussion of psychotherapist trainees’ professional development, the concept of “professional identity of psychotherapists,” which is

\textsuperscript{11} I chose to focus on identity formation in general rather than on the more specific domain of professional identity, as I see the former as more relevant in the context of the population of psychotherapists. Specifically, possibly more than in many other professions, the boundaries between psychotherapists’ professional identity and other aspects of identity are not clearly demarcated and are part and parcel of psychotherapy work. In addition, psychotherapists’ personal lives have been shown to be a salient influence on professional development (Bennett-Levy, 2006; Farber, 1983; Farber, Manevich, Metzger, & Saypol, 2005; Orlinsky & Rønnestad, 2005; Paris et al., 2006).
the focus of this inquiry, will be defined. I revisit the terms of self and identity in the Conceptual Framework and Research Questions chapter in which I offer a unifying definition in the context of the constructivist worldview that has guided this study.

Theories of Identity

Freud believed that the individual’s sense of self is acquired through the internalization of parental introjects during the genesis of the superego at the end of the Oedipal phase. These identifications, formed in childhood, are not susceptible to much change during adolescence or adulthood (Freud, 1923/1961). Although Freud wrote extensively on identifications, his focus was mainly on childhood identification processes and parental introjects. The first psychodynamic writings to move beyond childhood processes were those of Erik Erikson in his classic work, Childhood and Society (1964).

Erik Erikson

Erikson’s (1964) influence on the study of identity formation is widely recognized. His legacy is in part marked by his notion that the major psychosocial task that links childhood with adulthood is the consolidation of adult identity. Erikson’s approach to identity is a comprehensive one, encompassing psychological, social, and personal dimensions.

Identity, according to Erikson (1968), is the individual’s answer to the questions, “who am I?” and “how do I fit into the adult world?,” and serves to integrate multiple and, at times, contradictory childhood identifications. During adolescence, the ego reworks and reorganizes childhood identifications into a single structure. For Erikson, identity is best conceived as operating on a continuum, ranging from the ego syntonic pole of identity synthesis to the ego dystonic pole of identity confusion. Identity synthesis represents a reworking of childhood
identifications into a larger set of self-chosen ideals, whereas identity confusion represents the inability to develop a workable set of ideals on which to base one’s identity. To facilitate healthy functioning, self-knowledge should predominate over confusion. Since there are always aspects of self of which individuals are unaware, optimal placement along the continuum is thought to be somewhere in the middle, closer to ego synthesis. Erikson’s thinking on identity formation intended to answer the question of how individuals develop and maintain a sense of personal sameness and historical continuity required for healthy functioning (Erikson, 1968).

Erikson (1980) delineated four angles from which one’s identity can be observed: a sense of individual identity, continuity of personal character, ego synthesis, and inner solidarity. These angles represent different forms or directions that identity can take at different points in one’s life or in various situations. Erikson organized these four angles of identity into three levels according to each angle’s embeddedness in self and context. At the most fundamental level, Erikson postulated ego identity as ego synthesis and continuity of character. Ego identity is the personality agency responsible for behavioral, cognitive, and emotional control. It includes one’s basic beliefs about oneself that would be private or unconscious, such as intrapsychic conflict internalized from parents and carried over from childhood. As an amalgam of fundamental beliefs, ego identity was conceived to be temporally consistent and resistant to change. A firm ego identity is at the basis of effective adult functioning, and it derives its strength from its interactions with significant others and social institutions.

At the intersection between self and context, Erikson (1980) postulated personal identity as the set of ideals, beliefs, and goals that one shows to the world. Personal identity includes aspects of self that differentiate the individual from other people, such as career choices and romantic preferences. At the most contextually oriented level, Erikson spoke of social identity as
a sense of inner solidarity with a group’s ideals and as a consolidation of elements that one integrates into the sense of self from groups to which one belongs. Aspects of self, such as native language and ethnic background, would fall under this heading. So whereas ego identity controls behavior, personal and social identities are “content” identities in the sense that they constitute the internalized knowledge about self-concept, roles, and social behavior.

For Erikson (1980), these three dimensions of ego, personal, and social identities need to come together during the identity stage, lasting from puberty until late teens to late 20s, or else an identity crisis will ensue. He conceived of identity crisis as a period in which childhood identity is no longer suitable and an adult identity has not yet developed. Such an identity crisis is evident at all levels of identity and is characterized by a subjective sense of identity confusion, a behavioral and characterological disarray, and an inability to commit to social roles. Resolution of the crisis is promoted when a relatively firm sense of ego identity is developed, character and behaviors are stabilized, and social roles are assumed (Erikson, 1968).

Although most research on identity formation in psychology has moved beyond Erikson (Schwartz, 2001), there are still areas in the study of identity for which there is no substitute for his pioneering work (Sorell & Montgomery, 2001). As Côté and Levine (2002) note, “although Erikson did not complete the construction of a comprehensive, multidimensional theory of identity… he left a basic foundation for doing so” (p. 17). Erikson’s work is not without its critics (See Côté & Levine, 1987, for a review). His writings are rich in clinical material and metaphors, but lacking in rigor and theoretical precision. Erikson (1964) himself noted that “at times, the reader will find me painting contexts and backgrounds where he would rather have me point to facts and concepts” (p. 18). The result was a theory that is rich and imaginative, but from which operational definitions are difficult to extract (Côté & Levine, 1987). Nevertheless, a
number of researchers attempted to derive operational definitions and testable models from Erikson’s writings. James Marcia (1966, 1993) is the most notable, and his is the first Neo-Eriksonian identity model to stimulate a significant body of work.

Marcia: The Identity Status Construct

Focusing on Erikson’s construct of personal identity and based on narratives derived from interviews with college students, Marcia (1966) created an identity-status paradigm that stresses the centrality of individual choice-making in forming an identity. The paradigm’s key concepts, identity statuses, are based on cross-tabulation of two assumedly independent dimensions of exploration and commitment, extracted from Erikson’s theory. Exploration refers to the process of sorting through multiple alternatives, whereas commitment is the act of choosing one or more alternatives and following them. Commitment provides the person with a sense of purpose and continuity and alleviates identity confusion. Marcia initially saw the commitment dimension as central to identity formation. It was during the interviews he conducted that he realized that commitments could be arrived at by different means and that it is the dimension of exploration that determines the nature of identity (Marcia, 2001).

This cross-tabulation of high and low levels of commitment and exploration identifies four identity statuses, suggesting different character types: identity diffusion (low exploration, low commitment), identity foreclosure (low exploration, high commitment), identity moratorium (high exploration, low commitment), and identity achievement (high exploration, high commitment). The identity statuses are assumed to describe the individual’s identity both at the overall personality level and within any number of content areas known as domains (Marcia, 1966).
Each status has been associated with a distinct set of personality characteristics (for a more extensive review, see Marcia, 1980, 1993). Identity achievement refers to individuals who went through an identity search and committed to one or more alternatives. This status is associated with balanced thinking (Boytes & Chandler, 1992), effective decision-making (Marcia, 1993), and deep interpersonal relationships (Craig-Bray, Adams, & Dobson, 1988; Orlofsky, Marcia, & Lesser, 1973). Identity moratorium is the state of active exploration in the relative absence of commitment. This status is related to critical thinking, particularly the ability to generate multiple alternatives when faced with important life decisions (Berman, Schwartz, Kurtines, & Berman, 2001). These individuals are considered the most open-minded and thoughtful of all the statuses, continuing to sort alternatives at times of great uncertainty (Schwartz, 2001). Identity foreclosure is the state of committing to a set of goals, values, and beliefs in the absence of prior exploration. Foreclosed individuals tend to uncritically adopt someone else’s beliefs without much examination or questioning. Such individuals tend to be closed-minded, rigid, relatively conflict-free, and resistant to change (Marcia, 1980). Finally, identity diffusion represents a state of relative absence of both exploration and commitment. Diffusion is understood as representing a lack of any basic identity structure that would hold the individual and provide a basis from which to make choices and follow a consistent path. Such individuals appear apathetic and disinterested (Marcia, 1980) and are at greater risk for different maladaptive outcomes, such as academic and professional difficulties, depression, and poor interpersonal skills (Berzonsky, 1985; Marcia, 1993). Developmentally, the four identity statuses are theorized to vary hierarchically in terms of maturity of self-regulation and complexity of social functioning, with identity diffusion at the lower end, followed by foreclosure, moratorium, and achievement as the most mature and functionally complex status (Schwartz, 2001).
Recently there has been a branching out of research rooted in the identity status paradigm (See Schwartz, 2001, for a comprehensive discussion of extensions and expansions of identity status theory). Although Marcia’s theory has been extremely popular and well researched, it has been criticized on several grounds (Côté & Levine, 2002). Some writers suggest that the identity status model underrepresented Erikson’s “personal identity,” which encompasses many dimensions that are not included in Marcia’s model (e.g., value orientations and psychosocial moratoria; Côté & Levine, 1988; van Hoof, 1999). Other weaknesses addressed by these writers touch on the cultural validity of the model, the use of discrete categories to represent identities, the hierarchical nature of the model, and the emphasis on outcome of identity formation rather than on the process itself.

Identity in Postmodernity: Sameness and Continuity versus Inconsistency and Discontinuity

In traditional societies, identity is assigned through membership in the group and community, based on external systems of kinship and religion (Wheelis, 1966). It is more or less fixed at birth and integrated into relatively stable structures of beliefs and customs. By contrast, with the cultural beginnings of modern society came a shift in the locus of identity formation to the individual’s inner life (Gergen, 1991). With the weakening of group ties and the rise of individualism, individuals are distanced from collective obligations and challenged to define themselves independently of ancestral forms of thought and behavior by exercising autonomy, freedom, and choice. In a rapidly changing modern society, with its social divisions and ruptures and in the absence of unifying collective norms, the search for identity is an attempt to reconcile and overcome the multiple conflicts of a divided self. Nevertheless, amidst alienation and divisions, modern identity is still destined to find its expression in distinct social roles and relationships within the productive structures of modern life. Identity can still be defined by
relatively fixed boundaries of the self based on distinctions between inner and external, self and other; these boundaries allow for both connection and separation between the individual and the outer world. Thus, one can be alienated from one’s surroundings based on a separation of inner life from society, or can achieve some structure and fulfillment through connectedness with others (Dunn, 1998). Erikson’s identity theory, in its emphasis on personal sameness and historical continuity, is consistent with the modernist tradition.\footnote{In the Discussion chapter I return to the aspect of fluidity of Erikson’s theory, and following Schachter (2005), propose a more “postmodern” reading of Erikson.}

In contrast, theories of postmodernity project an image of a fluid self, characterized by fragmentation, discontinuity, and diffusion of boundaries between an inner and outer world (Dunn, 1998). Several contemporary writers have contested the notion that a continuous and consistent identity is the hallmark of the mature adult, and suggested that sameness and continuity are socially constructed qualities (Gergen, 1991; Lifton, 1999). Writing from slightly different perspectives, these writers point to the idea that in a late modern or postmodern era, in which individuals encounter constant rapid change and proliferation of technological and social stimuli, personal sameness may not be the distinguishing mark of a healthy sense of identity.

For instance, Gergen (1991) argues that today’s expanding communication technologies force individuals to relate to increasingly more people and institutions in a multiplicity of forms, each demanding a different conception of self and relationship. So intense is our social saturation, argues Gergen, that we take on the personas and values of the people with whom we communicate, leading to the population of self with fragments of others. This state not only promotes the erosion of character and the true and knowable self, but also invites incoherence. That is, for people to be ready to participate in a socially saturated and incoherent world, Gergen
claims, they have to be able to flexibly adapt to various contexts and connections. Lifton (1999) also views sameness and continuity as belonging to a more traditional time. He writes,

> The older version of personal identity, at least insofar as it suggests inner stability and sameness, was derived from a vision of a traditional culture in which relationships to symbols and institutions are still relatively intact—hardly the case in the last years of the twentieth century. (pp. 4-5)

Lifton’s “Protean self,” named after Proteus, the Greek sea god of many forms, is “fluid and many-sided…appropriate to the restlessness and flux of our time” (p. 1). This mode of being allows individuals to engage in continuous exploration and personal experimentation and, as a result, to deal resiliently with the world. Honneth (1992), too, identifies in the constantly changing culture a potential for personal freedom. He suggests that the freedom to select from a range of experiences without the constraints of tradition and conventions leads to the replacement of the notion of self-realization that assumes some life goals with the Nietzschean idea of “experimental self-creation.” These conceptions of self suggest that the natural psychological state of being today, rather than being characterized by an innate striving for a unified identity, is instead marked by an experience of “multiple” selves (Markus & Wurf, 1987) and contradictory tendencies (Gergen, 1991). The contemporary sociocultural context requires that individuals manage different self-concepts flexibly. Thus, the controversy between modern and postmodern conceptions of identity and self concerns not only whether individuals inherently strive for a consistent identity, but also whether that is even a desirable goal in our culture today.

**Implications for Professional Identity**

Professional identity is a specific domain of identity (Schwartz, 2001). Following Erikson’s definition of identity, psychotherapists’ *professional identity* can be thought of as an
attempt to answer the questions of “who am I as a psychotherapist?” and “how do I fit in the world as a psychotherapist?” It can be conceptualized on all three dimensions of identity, outlined by Erikson: ego, personal, and social. Specifically, \textit{professional ego identity} can refer to the subjective experience of being a psychotherapist and the mechanism responsible for processing and deriving meanings from clinical and personal experiences, as well as executing appropriate actions. \textit{Professional personal identity} would include the set of ideals, beliefs, goals, and behaviors related to being a psychotherapist that one shows to the world. Under this conception, psychotherapists’ theoretical knowledge would be part of their personal identity. Finally, \textit{professional social identity} would be conceived as the internalized knowledge about one’s role in the community of psychology and in society at large, as manifested in professional affiliations, theoretical identifications, and the like.

The contextual focus of this study, the phase of training, resonates with Erikson’s (1980) concept of \textit{institutionalized psychosocial moratorium}, which refers to the guidance many cultures provide members in order to help them transition from childhood to adulthood. This guidance involves a moratorium from adult responsibilities, providing individuals the time to develop their adult identity. This identity moratorium allows freedom to explore and experiment with various roles, without the need to carry permanent responsibilities or commitments. Similarly, psychotherapist trainees are exempt during training from the full responsibilities of being licensed practitioners and are allowed to explore and experiment with various therapeutic and professional roles.

**Professional Development of Psychotherapists in Training**

Most of the literature on the subject of psychotherapists’ professional self or identity has been theoretical rather than empirical, and often from a psychoanalytic perspective. One possible
reason for this might be the elusiveness of the terms “identity” and “self” and the difficulty of deriving operational definitions. Accordingly, most of the research reviewed in this section concerns the broader topic of psychotherapists’ professional development, focusing on the phase of training.

Psychotherapists in Training

Research on psychotherapists’ professional development has identified distinct phases of development—from novice to senior psychotherapists (Orlinsky & Rønnestad, 2005; Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992a). Several studies indicate that psychotherapists undergoing their graduate training represent a particular group with its own developmental tasks and challenges (Cicchetti & Ornston, 1976; Grafanaki, 2010; Milne, Dickson, Blackburn, & James, 1999; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992b; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003b).

Clinical Experience

First and foremost, the phase of training is naturally characterized by relatively limited clinical experience. Research has found that level of clinical experience is a meaningful predictor of important aspects of career development, with experience considered one of the main aspects of becoming a professional and gaining expertise (Benner & Wrubel, 1982; Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003; Skovholt & Jennings, 2004). Specifically, greater experience with clinical work is associated with increased appreciation and recognition of human variability, more effective therapeutic practice, decreased perceived vulnerability to the stress of clinical work, and a greater sense of cumulative improvement and therapeutic mastery (Cicchetti, Domenic, Ornston, 1976; Eells, Lombart, Kendjelic, Turner, & Lucas, 2005; Farber, 1985; Orlinsky & Rønnestad, 2005; Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003).
One way in which clinical experience enhances the effectiveness of therapeutic work is through the development of cognitive conceptual maps. Conceptual maps, used by psychotherapists at all levels, serve as broad guides for dealing with a variety of situations in clinical work (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003a). The map of the beginning psychotherapist is much like the map of the lay helper; it is based on the trainee’s life experience and typically includes direct advice, sympathy, and quick formulation of problems (Hill, Charles, Reed, 1981; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003a). During training, this so-called conventional map has to be replaced by a professional map. Until experience gives the trainee an adequate cognitive map, the trainee experiences the stress of inexperience as he or she attempts to access the cognitive maps of other experts and spontaneously use them.

It has also been shown that the mere accumulation of time in practice is not sufficient for growth; rather, the crucial factor is the way in which trainees experience and process acquired experience:

Experience is not the equivalent of longevity, seniority, or the simple passage of time. Experience means living through actual situations in such a way that it informs the practitioner’s perception and understanding of all subsequent situations. (Benner & Wrubel, 1982, p. 28)

Specifically, Benner and Wrubel (1982) state that openness to learning and willingness to recognize the complexities of professional work are necessary for the growth of psychotherapists at all levels, especially for those in training. Other important aspects of learning include experimenting with different roles and ways of being in the world, and being able to think in patterns that are not linear, logical, or sequential (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003a).
Challenges of Psychotherapists in Training

While certain stressors psychotherapist trainees experience are characteristic of the stage of training, such as being evaluated by training figures, others are challenges inherent to psychotherapy work (e.g., negotiating levels of involvement with and responsibility for clients) but intensified by trainees’ limited clinical experience and reduced self-confidence. Drawing from empirical and conceptual literature on counselors and psychotherapists’ development, Skovholt and Rønnestad (2003a) argue that the ambiguity of professional work is the major catalyst for trainees’ stress, underlying specific stressors. Several of the stressors they specify concern aspects of identity formation and the development of a sense of self as a psychotherapist. Specifically, they state that psychotherapists in training have fragile and incomplete practitioner-selves, porous or rigid emotional boundaries, glamorized expectations, and an acute need for positive mentors. Other stressors include acute performance anxiety, being scrutinized by professional gatekeepers, and using inadequate strategies to guide clinical work.

Research further shows that along with the challenges that all trainees share, there are unique concerns and difficulties associated with the beginning stages of training and the more advanced stages of training.\(^\text{13}\) Beginning trainees starting to see clients for the first time typically find this time to be exciting yet challenging (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003).\(^\text{14}\) The combined influence of theories, research, clients, professional mentors, one’s personal life, peers/colleagues, and the social-cultural environment can sometimes overwhelm the beginning trainee.

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\(^{13}\) In the remaining discussion, the term trainees will be employed as a general term for individuals undergoing training in clinical psychology. Beginning trainees will refer specifically to graduate students who are at the beginning stages of their training, and advanced trainees will refer to graduate students who have more clinical experience, usually working in an advanced practicum or internship.

\(^{14}\) Rønnestad and Skovholt (2003), two of the leading researchers in the area of psychotherapists’ development, summarize in this extensive paper an over decade-long longitudinal investigation, presenting a phase model as well as 14 themes of psychotherapists/counselors development. It is an incredibly rich, comprehensive, and informative paper to which I refer frequently throughout this discussion.
student. Beginning trainees experience a considerable gap between theory and practice, are acutely aware of their reduced competence, and tend to put themselves under great pressure to narrow this gap as quickly as possible. Accordingly, anxiety can be pervasive at the beginning stages of training (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992b).

Advanced trainees, however, in feeling more comfortable with clinical work and usually working in practicum or internship, deal at this stage with the challenge of functioning at a basic established/professional level. They have a greater appreciation of the impact of their training on their development, along with a recognition of how much more there is still to learn (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003). They tend to put themselves under great pressure to make no mistakes and to demonstrate perfect performances. This attitude typically leads advanced trainees to act in a conservative, cautious, and excessively thorough manner, showing little playfulness or spontaneity in their work (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003). There is an increased assimilation of external influences at this phase, but these have not yet been integrated into a personal way of working and behaving. The experience of advanced trainees is characterized by duality, feeling confident and vulnerable, belonging and not belonging to the professional community at the same time (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992b). Furthermore, advanced trainees more than experienced psychotherapists tend to deal with the stress of therapeutic work by personally distancing themselves from the work experience, feeling that they neither benefit nor harm their clients. Nevertheless, they are not more likely to avoid therapeutic engagement with clients as a means of coping with difficulties in practice, a tendency that seems to be more a function of psychotherapist’s personality and stressful life quality rather than clinical experience (Orlinsky & Rønnestad, 2005).
There are many models of psychotherapists’ professional development, a number of which specifically address the stage of training, often in the context of supervision (Fleming 1953; Hogan, 1964; Loganbill, Hardy, Delworth, 1982; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992a; Stoltenberg, Delworth, 1987). However, as far as I am aware, except for the model of Skovholt and Rønnestad (1992a), which focuses on the concept of self, there are no other models that explicitly address the identity formation of psychotherapists. Accordingly, in what follows I will review several models that include or touch indirectly on aspects of identity formation of psychotherapists in training.

A classic developmental model of psychotherapists in training\textsuperscript{15} that has been influential within the domain of psychodynamic psychotherapy is that of Joan Fleming (1953). Taking the point of view of the student and focusing on supervision as the primary influence on development, Fleming proposes three types of learning that characterize students’ experience at different experience levels: imitative learning, corrective learning, and creative learning.

\textit{Imitative learning} is learning by identification in which, given the limited experience of students, supervisors are telling students what to do and in essence are the ones who are treating the client. It is a didactic form of teaching, emphasizing suggestions and demonstrations. This type of learning may involve a passive and complete imitation in which students do not understand the reasons for their actions, and does not require much effort by students or supervisors. In \textit{corrective learning} supervisors discuss the dynamics of treatment with students, helping them to clarify their understanding of the client and to arrive at more accurate conceptualizations. In

\textsuperscript{15} Fleming (1953) focuses on the training of psychiatrists who at the time were the primary providers of psychotherapy within psychoanalytic circles.
helping students become aware of and correct their mistakes and areas of challenge, attention is also given to countertransference issues. With this type of supervision, students learn about themselves in relation to their psychotherapeutic work. In creative learning, students learn to think on the spot about the meaning of the client’s behavior and of their reactions to it. This learning requires much effort. Supervisors can promote this learning by asking students the kind of questions they can then ask themselves (i.e., modeling self-reflection). Through this learning students increase their understanding of interpersonal relationships and improve their ability to establish a constructive, therapeutic relationship. This model illustrates the interactive nature of students’ development and suggests that increased active engagement on both parts promotes (along with students’ growing experience) more sophisticated forms of learning. Corrective and creative forms of learning touch on identity formation, viewing students’ understanding of themselves as psychotherapists as contributing to the therapeutic relationship.

As part of a more extensive study of counseling doctoral students’ development, based on narrative analysis, Hill, Charles, and Reed (1981) present a conceptual framework that summarizes the developmental changes students report having gone through in their training. In the first stage, sympathy, students feel over invested and responsible for clients, reacting to them with the same responses as those used in other social situations. There is emotional reactivity and decreased awareness of one’s verbal and non-verbal behaviors. The supportive stance is often appreciated by clients but limits opportunities for growth, as difficult issues are not fully engaged. The second stage is the counselor stance in which students learn to do psychotherapy “the right way.” They adopt whatever model is being offered by the supervisor and use it exclusively regardless of clients’ needs. There is anxiety about competence and being evaluated. In the next phase, transition, exposure to a variety of models, supervisors, and clients challenges
the use of one method as new stimuli disrupt previous learning, creating anxiety. Students struggle to deal with the multiplicity of influences, but cannot integrate them into a personal style at this time, adopting an atheoretical stance or compartmentalizing the various influences. The final stage is the integrated personal style. Students at this phase are able to integrate various techniques and theories into a consistent style and respond flexibly to changing circumstances. There is a growing self-confidence, appropriate boundaries, and ability to use personal reactions to promote the treatment.

Hill, Charles, and Reed (1981) conceptualize these stages as “a continuum of relative growth,” stating that students are likely to move back and forth between them. The focus on transitioning from a passive adoption of a single treatment model to finding one’s unique way of working suggests a process of identity formation. In addition, there in an underlying assumption, stated explicitly, that psychotherapy work requires integration of various treatment models and techniques, and professional development is in fact conceptualized as a growing ability to do that in a way that is self-congruent. However, this model does not explicitly specify the processes by which students transition from one stage to another and does not address aspects of development beyond developing a way of working therapeutically. In addition, the role of supervision in promoting development beyond teaching a certain model is not specified.

Based on intensive interviews with 100 practitioners, Skovholt and Rønnestad (1992a) developed an eight-stage career model that more directly touches on the concept of self. The eight stages are: conventional, transition to professional training, imitation of experts, conditional autonomy, exploration, integration, individuation, and integrity. Three stages address the period of training, suggesting that psychotherapist trainees undergo many changes during this time. The conventional stage refers to the period before training. Prior to training, individuals help others
according to the known rules that govern their behavior in their personal relationships. This is the mode in which trainees begin their training. During training an increasing gap is created between the personal and professional selves. Trainees turn to external sources to develop new ways of functioning and suppress personal ways of functioning, such as their posture, sense of humor, or the way they typically conceptualize human behavior. This is especially characteristic of the beginning and middle periods of training (i.e., the stages of transition to professional training and imitation of experts). Much of trainees’ energy during training is directed at meeting the approval of professional gatekeepers. The enormous professional pressure manifests in rigidity in many areas of professional functioning, such as working style and conceptualization of issues.

With graduation and freedom from external control, a looser mode of functioning gradually develops. In this model Skovholt and Rønnestad conceive of professional development of psychotherapists as a process of increased individuation in which gradually there is greater integration between the personal and professional selves, allowing the development of a personal way of working.

To summarize, the reviewed models conceptualize development in sequential terms, delineating the different stages trainees typically go through during training. They suggest normative developmental paths, rather than a variety of patterns that development may take. In addition, they tend to focus on supervision as the primary context in which trainees’ development take place, thereby neglecting to consider other influential aspects of the training environment. While these models are not framed in terms of identity issues, they suggest the centrality of self-definition. In somewhat different ways all three portray a gradual progression from a more didactic form of learning and passive internalization of external influences to the

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16 Conceptualizations of development in terms of stages and a focus on supervision tend to characterize the literature on psychotherapist trainees’ development.
development of a more personal way of working therapeutically. However, the process by which such development occurs is not always clear.

Research focusing on the trainee perspective suggests that identity and professional development issues are important concerns for psychotherapists in training. For example, comparing the best and worst supervisory experiences of advanced trainees, Allen, Szollos and Williams (1986) found that quality supervision is measured by an emphasis on issues of personal growth, such as improving trainees’ self-confidence and exploring professional anxieties, over the teaching of technical skills.

Analyzing journals of counseling students documenting their experience in training, Howard, Inman, and Altman (2006) identified five major categories of what they term critical incidents in development. Incidents pertaining to professional identity were most prevalent, accounting for nearly a third of all reported incidents. This theme covered four content areas: personal identification with the counselor role, recognition of new or unfamiliar responsibilities involved in the counselor role, thoughts about counseling as a career and motivations to stay in the profession, and understanding one’s identity in the context of training. Beyond the category of professional identity, other categories of critical incidents were personal reactions to clients, competence, supervision, and philosophy of counseling. Philosophy of counseling, which refers to experiences that help trainees develop their conceptual framework of counseling, can also be considered an aspect of identity further underscoring the prevalence of issues of identity in significant experiences.

Similarly, analyzing newly qualified counselors’ accounts of their training experiences, Lowndes and Hanley (2010) identified four categories relating to the challenge of becoming
integrative counselors: training issues, applied issues, the impact of integrative training post qualifications, and the development of an integrative theory and identity. With respect to the latter, participants reported the absence of clear guidelines for forming their theoretical orientation and way of working to be the most challenging and anxiety-producing aspect of developing their identities.

*Psychotherapist Trainees’ Identity Formation in Context – The Training Environment*

The training environment of psychotherapist trainees plays a crucial and indispensable role in their professional development; it introduces them to various options for self-definition, teaches them theory, research skills, and how to conduct psychotherapy, and provides opportunities for experimentation with various professional roles (Boswell & Castonguay, 2007; Hill, Stahl, & Roffman, 2007). Rønnestad and Skovholt (2003) suggest that training programs impact trainees’ development not only through direct teaching and exposure to training experiences, but also by promoting certain approaches to learning and development. Specifically, they distinguish between two approaches used by trainees to master the complexities they encounter in training and psychotherapy work: the developmental approach and non-developmental approach. The *developmental approach* has an “active, searching, exploratory, trying out quality” and is guided by a long-term developmental goal. In contrast, the *non-development (stagnant) approach*, is characterized by a “defensive, experience-limiting and anxiety reducing quality” and a focus on short-term impression management rather than long-term goals (p. 13). The authors propose that a high achievement orientation of training schools, a large power differential between students and supervisors/professors, and a great magnitude of challenges encountered at the training phase contribute to trainees’ assumption of a non-developmental approach. In contrast, pointing to areas that training programs could address,
these authors and others indicate that the ability to appreciate complexity, tolerate uncertainty, and continuously reflect on and search for a more comprehensive understanding of oneself, others, and clinical work are prerequisites to avoid a stagnant process (Bennett-Levy, 2006; Paris, Linville, & Rosen, 2006; Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003).

In a similar vein, Kuyken, Peters, Power, and Lavender (2003) suggest that training programs’ impact on trainees’ development can go beyond providing trainees needed skills and knowledge to potentially promoting trainees’ well-being and mature approaches to learning. Investigating trainees’ appraisals of their training environment, they show that when trainees experience training demands as manageable and their training environment as supportive, they report few problems of psychological adaptation and can cope with learning and professional demands effectively.

An important source of interpersonal/environmental influence during the training period is mentors. Beginning trainees, who experience great vulnerability and dependency needs, are considerably influenced by professors and supervisors (Leszcz, 2011; Rønnestad & Skovholt, 1993; Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003). They search actively for ways to speed up the process of professional mastery, mostly by imitating role models. At the beginning phases of training, supervision tends to be more didactic, focusing on teaching trainees needed skills and techniques. There is also emphasis on providing structure to help trainees contain the considerable anxiety they typically experience (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003b).

Advanced trainees, although more confident, are still dependent on external influences and tend to find supervision very influential. As trainees acquire more experience, they critically observe the behavior and absorb the conceptualizations of supervisors and professionals. They
evaluate and respond to models in different ways, falling somewhere on a continuum between completely rejecting and completely accepting models and their components. There is movement towards corrective feedback and a growing dialogue about the work that is intended to increase trainees’ understanding of conceptualizations and therapeutic interventions (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003b). Furthermore, whereas for novice trainees formal supervision is more salient as a positive influence on development than is direct experience with clients, for more advanced cohorts the latter tends to rank first (Orlinsky & Rønnestad, 2005).

Discussing cases informally with colleagues is another important influence, one also more salient for novices than for members of more advanced cohorts. By contrast, taking courses or attending seminars, a somewhat less interactive activity, is viewed as relatively less important by novices (Orlinsky & Rønnestad, 2005). These findings taken together indicate the important role of professional environment and participation in a clinical discourse in psychotherapist trainees’ development.

**Summary**

Psychotherapist trainees today are forming their professional identities in an increasingly complex learning environment. Research suggests that trainees tend to take the path of gradually developing a personal therapeutic style and theoretical understanding (Hill, Charles, & Reed, 1981; Hogan, 1964; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992a). This task has become increasingly complex as trainees are exposed to multiple, often contradictory, ways of working and thinking and encounter considerable human diversity and constantly changing needs (Felix & Akhtar, 2004; Hansen, 2002). Research and clinical writings alike indicate that there is no one treatment approach that is superior to all and tend to support the use of multiple treatment modalities (Brown, 2011; Danziger, 1990/1994; Gabbard & Westen, 2003; Pine, 1998). Similarly, there are
increasing calls in the psychotherapy field for technical and theoretical eclecticism/integration (Botella, 1998; Hansen, 2002). The question then arises, how do psychotherapist trainees with limited experience and considerable self-doubt come to define a therapeutic style and worldview that can be resilient in meeting professional demands when they are presented with multiple identity options and no clear strategies to guide choices?

Existing models of trainees’ professional development tend to conceptualize development in terms of successive developmental stages, a gradual progression towards increasingly more sophisticated and individualized modes of functioning. Considering the diverse and multitude challenges trainees encounter, such linear and unified portrayals as applied to all trainees do not seem to fully capture the complexity of the task of identity formation. Indeed, most models of trainees’ development do not directly address the construct of identity. In addition, the majority of models tend to focus on supervision and therefore on the development of clinical competence, thereby neglecting other aspects of trainees’ professional development. Moreover, often the factors that allow transition from one stage to another are not clearly specified beyond accumulated clinical experience. While such experience is an important predictor of professional development and clinical expertise, research shows that the way experience is processed is equally important for psychotherapists’ growth (Benner & Wrubel, 1982; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003a).

Both theory and research point to the crucial and helpful role of training schools in trainees’ development, providing trainees the time to learn and develop, encouraging them to experiment with different roles, teaching them necessary skills, and providing guidance in mastering current and future challenges (Kuyken, Peters, Power, & Lavender, 2003; Orlinsky & Rosenstad, 2005). In contrast, it has been shown that when the demands they pose for trainees
outweigh the guidance they offer, training schools can be a source of great strain (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003). These findings suggest the significance of a continued attention to the training environment of psychotherapist trainees and to the challenges trainees experience within this environment.

The Present Study

This study aims to fill significant gaps in the knowledge about the identity formation of psychotherapists in training. Assuming an exploratory stance and focusing on the trainees’ perspective, the primary aim of this study was to examine the (potentially different) ways in which psychotherapists in training develop their identities. This study sought to understand both the challenges and concerns trainees experience as they learn and develop, and their view of the role of their training environment in their professional development.

The present study’s research questions are presented in the next chapter, following a delineation of the conceptual framework that has guided this study.
CHAPTER III: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

As I explored the underlying belief system that has guided my work—ontologically, epistemologically, and methodologically—I have come to recognize the different ways in which it has been shaped by my personal history and experience in living, and in turn the ways in which it has informed much that I do. I find that I bring similar sensibilities, ideas, and passions to both my research and clinical work. Indeed, my endeavor in this study—taking the role of a “passionate participant” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 115) who engages in a shared dialogue with others to understand through discourse and interpretation the ways in which they come to develop their sense of self (as psychotherapists)—greatly resembles the kind of work that takes place in psychotherapy as I understand it. My worldview, which guides both activities, is most consistent with constructivism. I came to formulate it as a more conscious belief system through my exposure to contemporary psychoanalytic theory. The term “constructivism” has often been used in contemporary psychoanalysis to designate a perspective that originated less in philosophy than in the clinical recognition that experience is at least partially ambiguous and is created in the tension and constant interaction between the internal (physical and mental) world and the external (social and physical) world (Hoffman, 1998; Mitchell, 1993; Stern, 1997). This perspective within psychoanalysis has resonated deeply with my experience in the world and in psychotherapy, as psychotherapist and as client, and has informed all stages of my study from the formulation of research questions to the choice of method and analytic strategy.

I use constructivism as a general term for a family of loosely related philosophical and methodological persuasions that share the goal of understanding the world of lived experience from the point of view of the actors who live it (Schwandt, 1994). Conceived particularly in response to notions of objectivism, empirical realism, objective truth, and essentialism, it holds...
that knowledge and “truth” are created, perspectivist, local, and validated through practice rather than discovered, absolute, universal, and validated through experimental means (Gergen, 2001). Within the broad umbrella of constructivism, my thinking with respect to research fits most consistently with the “constructivist paradigm” as laid out by Guba and Lincoln (1994, 2008). In delineating my specific version of constructivism, I use Guba and Lincoln’s (1994) distinction between the ontological, epistemological, and methodological questions as a guideline. I will address the methodological question in more detail when I discuss research design and method.

The Ontological Question

“What is the Form and Nature of Reality and, therefore, what is there that Can Be Known About?” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108)

I conceive of reality as pluralistic and malleable, expressible in a variety of symbol and language systems and stretched and shaped to fit the intentions and purposes of human agents. In my view, while there is a world to be grasped and made sense of, our experience of it always constitutes a dialectic between the given and the made (Winnicott, 1971); the givens (e.g., physical world) define the boundaries of what experience can be (i.e., we construct experience by avoiding violations of the given) and we take given experience and make it into our own (Stern, 1997). Some experiences are more given (e.g., visual perceptions) and others are more made (e.g., experience of an interpersonal interaction). With respect to the social world (as distinguished from the physical world), I think of subjective experience as at least partially indeterminate and created in interaction—as the “joint creation of interacting influences from within and without” (Stern, 1997, p. 5)—becoming meaningful through interpretation and adoption of perspective.
Similarly, in my view, forming an identity “entails a dialectic between what is given and what is created” (Hoffman, 1998, p. 23). That is, identity is always created in interaction between self and other and embedded in relational and cultural contexts. I think of identity (and self) as the way people organize (i.e., interpret) their experience and make meanings as they move through time and contexts. Accordingly, I tend to think more in terms of multiple and constantly changing identities, created in different contexts, rather than in terms of core and integral identities. I also recognize that with the exception of severe psychopathology, we all experience a continuity of identity across the different versions of identity. That is, while we organize our experience and sense of self in different ways as we move through different contexts, there is still a sense of a continuous “I” who creates these varied meanings. We need this sense of continuity so we can function and act purposefully in the world—prioritize, set goals, and make choices and commitments (Mitchell, 1993). Thus my identity as a psychotherapist is one of many other identities I have (e.g., woman, daughter, student) and itself includes multiple versions (e.g., the “clinic psychotherapist,” the “writer psychotherapist,” the “group therapy psychotherapist” and so on) depending on different relational contexts. Nevertheless, I have an enduring sense of myself as an “I,” and as a psychotherapist, beyond the different self-organizations. There is no one identity or version of self that is more real or true, though there may be ones that are more accepted. This brings us to the following question of what can then be known about the subject of identity formation of psychotherapists if there is no absolute truth to be discovered.

The Epistemological Question

“What is the Nature of the Relationship between the Knower, or Would-Be Knower, and what can Be Known?” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108)
I conceive of knowledge as transactional and subjective, produced through interpretation and negotiation of meanings. That is, I see the production of knowledge not as an activity of the individual mind, but as the collective generation of meaning through social exchange, shaped by conventions of language and other social and historical processes. The relationship between me, the investigator, and my research participants is one of closeness; I am a graduate student in training interviewing other graduate students in training about their unique perspective on a shared experience.

The aim of my study is gaining a better understanding of the subject of identity formation of psychotherapist trainees and the reconstruction of previously held constructions. The emphasis is not on discovering a single truth, but rather on the instrumental and practical function of one version of the truth. Knowledge becomes the ability to perform effective actions. Specifically, participants, constituting a “community” of multiple perspectives, are presumed to provide insight into the process of identity formation of psychotherapist trainees. Such insights, although partial, perspectivist, and local, can be nonetheless valid and useful, hopefully promoting understanding and action with respect to psychotherapist trainees’ professional development and training.

The Methodological Question

“How Can the Inquirer Go about Finding out Whatever He/She Thinks Can Be Known” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108)

My methodological approach is hermeneutical and dialectical. In my view, the question of how psychotherapist trainees develop an identity is inherently perspectivist and multiple; it can be approached from various vantage points and can be answered in many different ways.
Thinking of psychotherapists’ identities in terms of Erikson’s questions of “who am I?” and “how do I fit into the adult world?” (as a psychotherapist), I view identity as an inherently open question that is continuously redefined by multiple and changing answers. From the understanding of identity as a social construction, findings can be elicited and refined only through interaction between the investigator and participants’ whose experience is of interest. Indeed, the choice to study this subject by engaging in a dialogue with psychotherapist trainees—interviewing them about their professional development—was an obvious one for me. Through my participation in the interview, I, the interviewer, become co-constructor and co-author of participants’ variable and personal constructions. The identity that may emerge out of this interaction is one of many possible versions, specific to this particular relational context.

Then, through the use of conventional hermeneutical techniques, these co-constructions are interpreted, compared and contrasted through a dialectical process of iteration, analysis, critique, reiteration, reanalysis, and going back and forth between the narratives and my evolving constructions of the narratives. The aim is to arrive at a consensual understanding that is hopefully more informed and sophisticated than predecessor constructions. These joint constructions can be evaluated for the rigor and credibility of the methods by which they were arrived at, their “fit” with the data, the extent to which they provide a credible level of understanding, and the extent to which they have relevance and can be modified when new information conflicts with them.

My methodological choices emanated directly from my thinking about the nature of the subject matter. My research training has been mostly in the post-positivist paradigm and I am proficient with quantitative methods of inquiry. My familiarity with hermeneutical and dialectical methods has evolved as I explored how to best investigate this subject, attempting to
accommodate my personal sensibilities and existent traditions of inquiry. Often I found that choices I made intuitively regarding design, method, and analysis were later revealed to be consistent with known and recognized constructivist practices, underscoring the compatibility between my way of thinking and the constructivist framework. Throughout this process, my post-positivist training continued to inform my thinking as I gradually came to appreciate and understand the differences between paradigms.

Initially, I considered using both quantitative (i.e., a self-report identity questionnaire) and qualitative data and exploring the interplay between the different constructions, potentially producing varying levels of interpretation. However, it gradually became apparent that there are such fundamental differences between the two approaches and the kind of findings they produce that attempts to bridge them, if sensible, were beyond the scope of this study. More importantly, I learned that approaching the subject of identity from a post-positivist perspective is incongruent with the way I think about this issue and that my research questions as conceptualized and formulated are best answered within a constructivist paradigm.

Aims of Study

The primary aim of my study was to investigate how psychotherapists in training at a particular phase in their development and under specific professional and cultural circumstances develop their identities through interaction (i.e., the interview situation), which is embedded in certain historical and linguistic conventions. My focus was on understanding participants’ lived experience of developing their sense of self as psychotherapists and on the generation of a theory that could serve as a useful framework to think about this subject and potentially promote action with regard to the education of future psychotherapists.
Research Questions

I have approached my investigation with an open and exploratory attitude, seeking to gain insight into the following research questions:

1. Primary research question: How do psychotherapist trainees create their professional identities?

Underlying this question was a query about the nature of the construct of identity that would emerge out of my interpretations of participants’ accounts—its form (e.g., typology, interconnected axes, developmental progression, non-linear process) and content (e.g., primary themes).

Two additional questions that can be subsumed under this larger question as they pertain to specific domains of psychotherapists’ identity were of interest to me. These sub-questions were not pursued systematically, but rather served as questions I posed to the texts (Alexander, 1988) as I investigated the primary research question. That is, they helped to orient my exploratory investigation.

1.a. How do psychotherapist trainees develop their theoretical orientation?

Given the considerable theoretical plurality in the psychotherapy field and the growing recognition, in research and clinical circles, of the viability and effectiveness of multiple treatment models and therapeutic interventions (Griessom, 1996; Kopta, Lueger, Saunders, &
Howard, 1999), I wondered how trainees come to develop a theoretical understanding and how theory is used in their clinical work. I think about the ongoing development of a theoretical orientation as a microcosm of the larger question of identity formation; the task of developing a theoretical framework for one’s clinical work brings into sharp focus many of the challenges involved, in my view, in forming a professional identity as a psychotherapist (e.g., plurality of options for identifications; no clear guidelines to what is “right”). While it is a familiar question for psychotherapists in training, I have always found it to be a difficult one for students to answer. Research indicates that responses to the challenge of developing a theoretical orientation are varied, including integrating multiple theoretical perspectives, using various ideas and techniques without an organizing framework (i.e., eclecticism), adhering to a primary theoretical perspective or treatment model, and assuming an a-theoretical orientation (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Thus, examining the development of a theoretical orientation allows access to an important area of psychotherapist trainees’ identity formation without asking about their professional identities directly.

1.b. How do psychotherapist trainees understand their clinical work and their role as psychotherapists?

In contrast to the question of theoretical orientation, which I view as a more familiar, focused, and relatively prescriptive question, I find this question to be broader, more ambiguous, 

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17 The subject of theoretical orientation is often discussed in supervision, practicum, and classes. It is also part of the written application for internship, and is often included in interviews for externship or internship.

18 This statement is based on my observations of peers and on my experience interviewing both applicants for internship and participants in my study.
and not often discussed in training, thus allowing access to a less formulated, potentially more personal area of self-definition.

2. What kinds of challenges do psychotherapist trainees face in forming their professional identities?

Part of the motivation to pursue this study was my sense that current professional and cultural circumstances are particularly challenging in terms of identity formation. Thus, I was interested in examining the ways in which my observations of current challenges, supported by theory and empirical research, would be consistent with and different from trainees’ subjective experience. Another thought underlying this question was the idea that trainees’ challenges with respect to their professional development may constitute what Yin (1984) calls an “extreme” case and thus may provide a sharper look at issues of professional development and identity. Finally, as noted in the Literature Review chapter, research shows that a poor balance between trainees’ resources and the training demands they face negatively impacts their short- and long-term professional development (Farber & Heifetz, 1982; Kuyken, Peters, Power, & Lavender, 2003; Orlinsky & Rønnestad, 2005). Thus, I reasoned that gaining an understanding of aspects of training and professional journey that trainees experience as challenging could point to potential areas for intervention.

3. What aspects of their training do psychotherapist trainees find most valuable in terms of their professional development and what do they feel is missing from their training?
Touching on the primary context within which trainees develop their identity—namely, the training environment and those with whom trainees interact, including teachers, mentors, supervisors, clients, and peers—I was interested in investigating the ways in which trainees experience their environment. In addition, consistent with the study’s goal to apply the knowledge gained to the education of psychotherapists, trainees’ accounts could be instructive, pointing to aspects of training that deserve improvement.

Evolution of Research Questions

My research questions at the initial phase of the research proposal included several exploratory research questions and a few general hypotheses. As my approach was exploratory, naturally, and as the analysis of data advanced, the initial research questions evolved and at times were omitted altogether, adapting to the nature of the emerging findings. In what follows I will briefly describe this evolution. Specific issues will be taken up in more detail in Appendix A.

During the research proposal meeting, a suggestion was made to include an objective questionnaire of identity, which would allow the exploration of the relationship between findings produced by different measures of identity, representing different conceptualizations of identity. Thus, in the data collection phase, following the interview, participants also filled out a background information questionnaire (Appendix B) and the Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (EIPQ; Balistreri, Busch-Rosnagel, & Geisinger, 1995; Appendix C). Findings from the EIPQ were not included in the study as I had intended. This issue is also elaborated in Appendix C.

The primary research question concerning the different ways in which psychotherapist trainees develop their professional identity has remained unchanged throughout the study. In the initial proposal, in addition to the more general phrasing, this primary question was stated in two
different ways, expressing a similar notion. One formulation followed Schachter (2004, 2005) in his use of Erikson’s (1968) terms of selective repudiation, mutual assimilation, and absorbing identifications in a configuration. Schachter suggests that these terms can be used to point to three different possible approaches to identity construction, namely 1) making a single identification while suppressing competing alternatives (selective repudiation), 2) integrating possible identifications in a coherent manner (mutual assimilation), and 3) creating a configuration that can tolerate contradictions and inconsistencies (absorbing identifications in a configuration). Accordingly, I restated the primary research question to look at the different ways in which psychotherapist trainees may use these processes variably in forming their identity. I also paraphrased the question in terms of current discussions in identity literature regarding the nature of identity, asking whether trainees would typically strive for a consistent identity (on the “modernist” end of the continuum), or would demonstrate multiple, possibly contradictory, identity configurations (on the “postmodernist” end of the continuum). These two questions reflect my attempt at the time of proposal to make the general research question more specific and to offer a possible framework within which to think about it. However, throughout the analysis of the narratives, my thinking was exploratory, approaching the data with the very general question of how does this individual develop his or her identity as a psychotherapist. Thus, I did not include this original rephrasing of the main research question in the section above, as I feel it does not reflect my thinking during the long analytic process. Nevertheless, it should be noted that while I have not thought in terms of Erikson’s concepts or modern versus postmodern notions, the underlying ideas these questions reflect of singularity versus multiplicity

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19 I further elaborate on Schachter’s (2004, 2005) perspective on these terms postulated by Erikson (1968) in Appendix D.
were in the background of my thinking, shaping my questions, inquires, and interpretations. For a more elaborated documentation of these issues please see Appendix A.

The two sub-questions concerning theoretical orientation and view of clinical work and the questions about current challenges and evaluation of the training program remained unchanged. While all four questions illuminate important aspects of the process of identity formation, the latter two questions about perceived challenges and the training environment were also analyzed more systematically as they have direct implications for training (The findings from this inductive analysis are presented in Appendix J).

Several other questions that were included in the original research proposal, while they were part of the conceptual framework that has guided my analysis, impacting my inquiry in implicit ways, were not investigated directly. One such question concerned the boundaries between trainees’ personal and professional identities/selves. The distinction between the two is an ambiguous one and a matter of interpretation. In this context I define personal identity as an overarching category of identity that includes different, more specific domains of identity, which differentiate individuals from one another, such as romantic relationships, political views, and religion, as well as one’s professional identity.\(^20\) Thus in a way, it was a question about the boundaries around one’s professional identity: how permeable are they relative to other aspects of one’s identity? What kind of influence do different aspects of personal identity have on trainees’ professional identity? How do trainees define the boundaries around their professional identity? While this focus was not investigated directly, it has influenced my inquiry. I paid close attention to the narrative choices participants made and to the interplay between personal and

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\(^{20}\) I differentiate between this definition and Erikson’s use of “personal identity,” which refers to a level of identity created in the intersection between self and context (the other two levels are Ego Identity and Social Identity; See Literature Review chapter, p. 27 for elaboration).
professional aspects. For instance, one of the things I considered in reading participants’
accounts was their scope: are they focused on professional issues alone or intertwined with
personal matters? Do the narratives begin with trainees’ early history, professional choice of
psychotherapy, or do they travel between the professional and other aspects of the self? What
underlined my interest in this question was my view, supported by research and theory, that what
is so unique about the psychotherapy profession and makes the question of professional identity
formation so interesting and complex is that the boundaries between personal and professional
selves are blurred (Farber & Golden, 1997; Skovholt & Jennings, 2004). That is,
psychotherapists’ personality, attitudes, and beliefs, which are shaped by their personal history,
inevitably impact their therapeutic presence, style, and choices, both consciously and
unconsciously. Given that in many therapeutic schools today, the psychotherapist as a person is
the primary instrument of change (Clarkin, 2009; Mitchell, 1997; Wallerstein, 1998), this
dynamic becomes all the more interesting and relevant. This idea about the boundaries between
professional and personal, while having changed and evolved, is represented in some way in the
final theoretical framework I have developed in the interplay between trainees’ participation in
the external training environment (consistent to some extent with the professional) and personal
reflection on their experience linking current experience to the professional journey (consistent
to some extent with the boundaries between personal and professional).

Another area of inquiry that was included in the initial proposal but was not followed up
as proposed was trainees’ level of reflection on questions of identity. Trainees’ reflective
capacity emerged from the literature on psychotherapists’ professional development as an
important quality promoting growth and protecting against professional stagnancy. Such
observations were consistent with my own personal view that in order to deal constructively with
complex questions of identity trainees have to actively engage in these questions. Thus, I was interested in examining the extent to which trainees actively reflect on their experience in training and engage in questions of identity and professional development, or alternatively avoid such engagement. In addition, I was interested in the interplay between various aspects of identity formation and trainees’ reflective capacities. Specifically, I proposed a general exploratory question and three more specific hypotheses in this regard. I wondered how different ways of forming identity would differ in terms of level of reflection. For instance, would identities that were more consistent and coherent be associated with less reflection than identities that were multiple and inconsistent? With respect to theoretical orientation, I hypothesized that psychotherapist trainees who managed multiple theoretical identifications (versus adherence to a single theoretical perspective) would demonstrate greater self-reflection and more active engagement in the process of identity formation. Similarly, I predicted that trainees who actively engaged in and reflected on their professional identity would have a more complex understanding of their clinical work and role as psychotherapists than trainees who avoid such engagement. Finally, with respect to current challenges, I hypothesized that the more challenges and stressors psychotherapist trainees experienced in forming a professional identity, the more they would tend to avoid active reflection on the process of identity formation. I had intended to investigate this complex issue by utilizing the Discourse Attribute Analysis Program (DAAP), a widely-used linguistically-based method that can be used to track the emotional and cognitive processes a speaker undergoes as he or she speaks, including reflection on the narrative material during the interview (Bucci & Maskit, 2005, 2007). However, as the analysis of data progressed and my ideas began to take shape, I realized that my emerging constructs and thinking on these issues did not relate very clearly to the concept of reflection as conceptualized by the DAAP.
Thus, while these were still viable and fascinating questions to pursue, it would have become a project in its own right that was beyond the scope of this dissertation. (For a more elaborated documentation of this issue please see Appendix A).
CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

Constructing the Sample

*Defining the Case*

Because the study’s primary research question concerned the *different ways* in which psychotherapists in training develop their professional identities, my focus in constructing the sample was on *variation* within a *well-defined* context. Since I view identity as constructed in the tension between the individual and the context, in order to investigate the different manifestations of individual-context interactions, I found it important to have the context of training be a constant across participants. Accordingly, I decided to limit sampling to students in doctoral psychotherapy programs. Several considerations guided this decision. First, doctoral programs for psychotherapy typically follow a particular training path, involving similar trajectories and challenges; a certain level of homogeneity would therefore be maintained in terms of the context. In addition, compared to Master’s programs, the duration of doctoral programs and the various training components they typically involve that pose multiple demands (e.g., coursework, clinical externship, an extensive research project), result inevitably in an immersion in the developmental phase of training and thus in professional development issues. Similarly, the moratorium from “adult responsibilities” (Eriskon, 1980) that training permits, such as delaying decisions regarding one’s professional path and having one’s clinical work supervised by a licensed practitioner, also allows trainees to focus on their professional development more purposefully, bringing issues of identity to the fore. Finally, the length of doctoral programs, which may range from four to seven and eight years, allows the examination
of the development of identity across time, as trainees advance and gain more clinical experience.

Within the more defined boundaries of doctoral training programs, my aim was to obtain a relatively heterogeneous sample in terms of demographics (e.g., age, gender, ethnicity) and structural aspects of professional development that may impact identity formation, such as training program’s location and theoretical orientation. My thinking here was that the more diverse the sample is in terms of these characteristics the more it would allow for the identification of variations, if such existed.

**Sampling**

*Purposeful Sampling*

Consistent with my specific interest in identity formation of psychotherapists in training and the decision to focus on doctoral psychotherapy programs, I used purposeful sampling, rather than random, recruiting participants who were within the boundaries that I had defined.

*Multiple-Case Sampling*

Given the nature of the primary research question, focusing on identifying a variety of ways of identity formation, I used a multiple-case sampling. My thinking was that looking at a range of cases would allow for the identification of patterns through the comparison of similar and contrasting cases. In addition, it would also allow for the replication of findings across the data set (Yin, 1991) and thus would add confidence to findings. Miles and Huberman (1994) support the use of multiple cases: “Multiple cases offer the researcher an even deeper understanding of processes and outcome of cases, the chance to test (not just develop) hypotheses, and a good picture of locally grounded causality.” (p. 26)
Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Since I was interested in the identity formation of psychotherapists in training, sampling was limited to participants who were still in their training phase (i.e., not licensed), ranging from first year to post-doc internship. Consistent with my case definition, sampling was limited to students in PhD psychotherapy programs, mostly clinical and counseling psychology programs, which share similar training trajectories. Inclusion of participants from other programs, such as school psychology or PsyD clinical programs, was determined on a case-by-case basis. Such participants were accepted if their training followed a similar structure to clinical and counseling psychology PhD programs, including minimum three years of coursework, a dissertation project, extensive psychotherapy training, and a clinical internship. In addition, trainees who underwent extensive training programs prior to their graduate studies, such as a psychoanalytic training, were excluded. Furthermore, trainees who had had more than seven years of clinical experience (the reasonable maximum years of experience acquired in a typical PhD psychotherapy program) were also excluded.

Theoretical Orientation and Geographical Location

Since I conceived of theoretical orientation as an important aspect of psychotherapists’ professional identity and addressed it in the research questions, I considered the theoretical orientation of participants’ training programs in decisions regarding sampling. While trainees may develop a theoretical perspective that is different from their training program, their initial and primary exposure to psychotherapy theory is typically provided by their training programs (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992a). Thus, I reasoned that the theoretical orientation of training programs would potentially be a crucial factor in trainees’ development of a theoretical approach and consequently in identity formation. To achieve a relatively theoretically diverse sample,
attempts were made to sample participants from locations other than New York. Thus, recruiting attempts were directed at internship programs, which are often attended by trainees from programs outside of New York. In addition, because of access and the popular notion that psychotherapy programs in California tend to be more cognitive-behavioral in orientation (while New York is more psychodynamic in orientation)\(^2\) recruiting was done in the Bay area in California as well.

**Solicitation of Study Participants**

Participants were recruited in several ways. I contacted via email Directors of Training of clinical psychology, counseling psychology, and clinical internship programs in New York and California, asking them to distribute an email to their doctoral students describing the study (See Appendix E). I also posted some fliers in several training programs in New York (See Appendix F). Finally, I attempted to reach a broader circle of people through connections with colleagues, asking them to forward my email to potential participants. I corresponded with interested candidates via email, responding to their questions, providing them with a description of the study, and verifying that they met the study inclusion criteria. Collection of data was done during the months of July to September of 2007. Twenty-nine participants met the final criteria and were included in the analysis.

Compensation. In order to limit the threat of self-selection of volunteers and to ease the recruiting process, I decided to use part of a research grant to pay participants $30 for their time.

\(^2\) Based on an analysis I conducted on data provided by the *Insider's guide to graduate programs in clinical and counseling psychology. 2008/2009 edition* (Norcross, Sayette, & Mayne, 2008), of the training programs included in the book, 71% of programs located in New York identified themselves as having a primary psychodynamic orientation, 18% reported a primary cognitive-behavioral orientation, and 11% stated other influences. In contrast, in California, 30% of training programs defined their primary theoretical orientation as psychodynamic, 30% as cognitive-behavioral, and 40% stated other influences.
and effort. I also offered participants a copy of their interview once it was transcribed, which many of them accepted (65.5%).

Protection of Human Subjects

Prior to data collection, I took measures to ensure the protection of all study participants, following the guidelines of the Office of Human Research Protection (OHRP, 2004). I gained study approval from Teachers College Institutional Review Board (IRB) and designed my study with the aim of protecting participants’ privacy and confidentiality and minimizing any potential risks. Before agreeing to participate in the study, potential participants received an informed consent letter via email (See Appendix G). The first part of the letter described the study, its potential risks and benefits, protection of data confidentiality, time involvement, and the ways in which the results of the study will be used. The second part of the letter described participants’ rights. Prior to the interview, participants were given a hard copy of the informed consent letter printed on Teachers College letterhead, and were asked to read it carefully and, if accepted its terms, to sign it. Throughout all stages of the study I remained conscientious of safeguarding participants’ rights, privacy, and confidentiality. (See Data Management section in this chapter, p. 81, for further elaboration of this issue).

Sample Characteristics

Sample characteristics are based on a background questionnaire (Appendix B), which participants completed at the end of the interview.

Participants were 29 doctoral students in clinical psychology (22, 75.9%), counseling psychology (5, 17.2 %) and school psychology (clinical track; 2, 6.9%) programs. Twenty-six
(89.7%) were in PhD programs and three (10.3%) were in PsyD programs.\textsuperscript{22} Participants came from training programs located in New York (17, 58.6%), California (10, 34.5%), Illinois (1, 3.4%) and Indiana (1, 3.4%). Twenty-three participants were women (79.3%) and six were men (20.7%). Participants were primarily of European-American origin (23, 79.3%). Three participants (10.3%) identified themselves as Asian-American, one as Latino (3.4 %) and two as other (6.9%).\textsuperscript{23} Participants’ ages ranged between 23 and 45 with a mean age of 30.4 ($SD = 5.09$). Twelve participants (41.4%) had a Bachelor’s degree, 13 (44.8%) had a Master’s degree, and four (13.8%) had been awarded their PhD, but were not yet licensed.

In terms of stage in training, nine (31.0%) participants were in the coursework stage (i.e., $1^{\text{st}}$-$3^{\text{rd}}$ year; beginner trainees) and 20 (69.0%) were in the post-coursework stage (i.e., $4^{\text{th}}$-$8^{\text{th}}$ year; advanced trainees).\textsuperscript{24} Participants varied in terms of their clinical experience, ranging from those who had no experience conducting psychotherapy to those who had seven years of experience, with an average of 3.7 years, ($SD = 1.94$). In terms of the number of clients seen in psychotherapy, three participants (10.3 %) reported to have worked with 1-5 clients, five (17.2%) reported 6-10 clients, three (10.3%) reported 11-20, four (13.8%) reported 21-30, and 14 (48.3%) reported to have worked with more than 30 clients.

\textsuperscript{22} These programs shared a similar structure and trajectories with PhD programs (e.g., small size class, extensive research, internship).

\textsuperscript{23} The \textit{APA 2006 Annual Report} on accredited clinical and counseling psychology programs (based on 212 clinical and 70 counseling psychology programs that completed the \textit{2006 Annual Report Online}) indicates that in 2006 women comprised 76.7% of clinical psychology programs and 72.5% of counseling psychology programs. In terms of ethnicity, in clinical psychology programs, 71.6% were White, 7% were African-American, 11.2% were Hispanic-Latino, 7% were Asian-Pacific Islander, 3 % were Multi-Ethnic, and less than 1% identified as Other. In counseling psychology programs, 65.5% were White, 11.7% were African-American, 7.3% were Hispanic-Latino, 10.5% were Asian-Pacific Islander, 3% were Multi-Ethnic, and 2% identified as Other.

\textsuperscript{24} Specifically, five participants (17.2%) were in the first year, three (10.3%) in the second, one (3.4%) in the third, four (13.8%) in the fourth, eight (27.6%) in the fifth, six (20.7%) in the sixth, one (3.4%) in the seventh, and one (3.4%) in the eighth (The eighth-year student had seven years of clinical experience and thus met inclusion criteria).
Twenty-six participants (89.7%) had been in their own personal psychotherapy, with an average time in therapy of 3.7 years ($SD = 3.7$). At the time of the interview, 17 (58.6%) participants were in their own personal psychotherapy. Participants reported that they discussed professional issues significantly more in their personal therapy than in their training ($t = -3.40$, $n = 26$, $p = .002$).

In terms of training programs’ theoretical orientation, 19 participants (65.5%) described their programs as having a primary theoretical orientation, whereas 10 (34.5%) described their programs as eclectic or integrative in their theoretical stance. When asked to specify the various theoretical perspectives that their training program espouse, 18 participants (62.1%) named psychoanalytic-dynamic, eight (27.6%) cognitive-behavioral, three humanistic (10.3%), two systemic (6.9%) and one “other” (3.4%). This distribution is not characteristic of the training programs in the US and is the result of the over-representation of New York programs, which tend to be more psychoanalytic-dynamic in orientation (Norcross, Sayette, & Mayne, 2008). In describing their own theoretical perspective, 18 participants (62.1%) identified themselves as either eclectic or integrative and 14 (48.3%) stated that they espoused a primary theoretical orientation but were open to other theoretical influences. One participant stated that she had no theoretical orientation. No participants espoused having a single theoretical orientation. These data are consistent with research findings indicating that an integrative/eclectic orientation to psychotherapy has consistently remained the most popular orientation among clinical psychologists in the United States for the past three decades (Norcross, Karpiak, & Lister, 2005).

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25 The integrative viewpoint differs from the eclectic approach in that it suggests a foundation or center of practice, such as existential theory. There is integration from other theories in order to broaden and strengthen the main approach. Thus integrative therapy creates some limitations as compared to the eclectic approach. Whereas eclectic pulls from theories very liberally and quickly adapts to new ideas, the integrative approach incorporate new ideas or techniques more deliberately (Goldfried, Glass, & Arnkoff, 2011).
When asked to specify their most prominent theoretical orientation, 16 participants identified themselves with psychoanalytic-dynamic (55.2%), seven with cognitive-behavioral (24.1%), three with humanistic (10.3%), one with systemic (3.4%), and three with “other”. 72.4% percent of participants espoused the same theoretical orientation as their training program.

The Interview

*Choice of the Method of Interview*

The idea to explore my research questions by interviewing psychotherapy students about their experience was first and foremost an intuitive, almost taken-for-granted, decision. Coming from the psychotherapy profession myself, it was a natural choice to explore the subject of identity formation by attempting to understand the lived experience of psychotherapists in training through a mutual exchange and interpretive approach. In addition, given the complexity of the subject, my exploratory approach, and my view of identity as inherently subjective, co-created, and contextual, working with qualitative data seemed an obvious choice. Moreover, one of my primary motivations for conducting this study was my sense that there is not enough discussion of professional development issues in training. It was therefore important to me to have a shared dialogue around this issue. Finally, I was interested in the interview not only as a means for generating narrative data, to produce knowledge about a subject of interest, but also as a live performance, an in-vivo manifestation of identity. The different ways in which participants used this opportunity to make meaning, learn about themselves, and recreate their identity through interaction with me, I thought, might illuminate certain aspects of their different approaches to identity formation.
Although I did not originally formulate this choice of method in terms of constructivist paradigm, it is one of the intuitive decisions I had made that directly emanated from the way I think about identity, subjective experience, and the production of knowledge, and thus was consistent with my constructivist framework. Specifically, the interview allows access to knowledge about identity through a conversation between two participants (the investigator and interviewee) about a shared topic of interest. The locus of knowledge is the relationship rather than individuals’ minds. Through this shared dialogue meanings are negotiated and co-created. The interview, being a one-time occurrence involving a particular interpersonal context, underscores the local and contextual nature of knowledge production. Knowledge produced in one context is not automatically transferable or commensurate with knowledge produced in another context.

**Interview Questions**

The interview consisted of a central question and four additional questions. Prior to each question, participants were given a card on which the question was printed, allowing them to follow along as I read them the question. They could also use it as an anchor to go back to as they were telling their story. Each question was accompanied by a time frame suggestion. This was done for several reasons. First I wanted to point to the primacy of the first question, allocating it sufficient time. I also wanted to allow participants to plan their time in order to keep the interview within certain time boundaries (between an hour and an hour and a half). Because of the open-ended and therefore somewhat ambiguous nature of the interview questions, especially the first main question, I thought the time suggestion would provide some structure within which participants could explore freely. Indeed, I found that the time suggestion was helpful for those who needed some structure and yet did not prevent others from using the time
as they pleased. It became in a way another stimulus to which participants responded in various ways.

The interview consisted of the following questions:

1) “Please tell me in as much detail as you can the story of your professional development as a psychotherapist. While telling me the story, I would especially like you to touch on what brought you to this profession, what contributed to your development and in what way, and where you see yourself in the future.” (30-40 minutes)

2) “How would you describe your theoretical orientation, and how did you come to develop it?” (10-15 minutes)

3) “Please tell me how you understand your work in the (therapy) room?” (10-15 minutes)

4) “Please tell me about the challenges and concerns you are currently facing on your way to becoming a professional and how you are dealing with those challenges” (5-10 minutes)

5) “In your training, what have you found most helpful in terms of your development, and what has been missing?” (5-10 minutes)

6) “How was it for you to talk about these issues?”

The phrasing of the first interview question was informed by insights proffered by narrative psychology suggesting that through the act of narrativity, people come to know who they are and make sense of their world (Doucet & Mauthner, 2008; Somers & Gibson, 1994). This perspective is appealing in that it allows for the existence of an active, yet constantly changing, subject (McNay, 2000). Writing from a narrative perspective, McAdams (1988, 1996) views the process of identity formation as a dynamic, evolving life story, and understands

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26 This question was not part of the formal interview questions. It was not printed on a card or given an estimated time, but rather was added by me as part of ending the interview by allowing participants to reflect on it.
Erikson’s concept of identity configuration as a configuration of plot, character, scene, and theme. He sees people as self-biographers who rearrange their different selves into a narrative whole in an attempt to answer Erikson’s (1968) questions of: “Who am I?,” and “how do I fit into the adult world?” McAdams’ theory suggests that an individual’s effort to develop identity would be revealed in his or her attempts to create a life story. The life story—a conscious manifestation of an identity process that also has an unconscious substratum—can be used to help reveal how identity is constructed and what possible forms identity configurations may take.

Using McAdams’s framework as a guide, the first question constituted the central element of the interview, constructed to access the “thematic life story” (Schachter, 2004) of participants’ professional development. The question aimed to extract the data of “memory and how it emerges in description,” rather than the data of “present conscious reflection as in opinion, preferences, evaluations, professed values, and the like” (Alexander, 1988, p. 266). I assumed that participants would generally find it easier and less threatening to describe recollections of critical events and incidents pertaining to their professional development as psychotherapists from which opinions, preferences, and ways of approaching identity formation may be gleaned than to respond to evaluative and reflective questions about identity formation (Alexander, 1988). Accordingly, the primary interview question as well as the additional interview questions did not include the word “identity” and focused on the presumably more neutral term of “professional development.”

The four additional questions focused on different aspects of identity formation that were of interest to me and were included in the study’s research questions. Briefly, the second and third interview questions concerned the development of a theoretical orientation and an understanding of one’s clinical work, which I considered to be important areas of self-definition.
The fourth question addresses the research question about the challenges psychotherapist trainees experience on their professional journey. Finally, the fifth question relates to the research question about the primary context in which trainees develop—their training environment (See p. 57 for the study’s research questions). In addition to illuminating the ways in which identity emerges out of the interaction between the individual and his or her context, this question had a pragmatic, action-oriented aim of understanding the training experience from the perspective of those who undergo it.

The sixth question, which asked participants to reflect on the interviewing process, emerged naturally out of my interaction with participants. Consistent with my thinking of the interview situation itself as a live performance of identity, this question often provided interesting insights about the experience of engaging in the process of narrating and self-defining.

Procedure

Prior to interviewing, interaction with participants was done via email, with the aims of establishing interest and suitability, clarifying the nature of involvement, and when relevant, negotiating a place and time for the interview to take place. I was flexible in terms of accommodating participants’ time and location preferences, with the exception that the location had to be sufficiently free from distractions. The majority of interviews were done in the vicinity of Teachers College classes or at private offices at participants’ workplaces. Two interviews took place at a café, which turned out to be a less than optimal choice as it negatively impacted the quality of the recoding. Four interviews were conducted at my home and one interview was done at a participant’s home. I conducted all the interviews myself.
Upon meeting, participants read and signed an informed consent form and had a chance to ask any additional questions they had. Then, I read participants the following excerpt, describing the goals of the study and placing it in context:

The focus of this study is psychotherapist trainees’ professional development. The study seeks to examine psychotherapist trainees’ unique experiences of becoming a psychotherapist. It is our hope that findings from this study will be of benefit in understanding the challenges and trajectories involved in the beginning phase of psychotherapists’ career development and the ways in which training schools can better meet trainees’ needs.

I then read the following:

The interview includes one main question and four additional questions. It should take about an hour to an hour and a half. I will give you a time frame for each question to help you organize your thoughts, but you can talk for as long as you want.

Before we begin, could you talk for a few minutes about where you are currently in your professional development? What are you doing now professionally?

The reason for the latter question was twofold. It was a way to establish some framework for the conversation and thereby to allow participants the freedom to begin their story any way they liked. In addition, as I mentioned previously, I initially intended to use the DAAP (Bucci & Maskit, 2005, 2007) to analyze certain linguistic aspects of the narratives. The DAAP requires the establishment of a baseline of style of speaking. This is done by analyzing a relatively emotionally neutral passage of minimum 25 words. Thus, the response to this question was also intended for that purpose.

During the course of the interview I attempted to strike a balance between letting participants tell their stories uninterruptedly and obtaining a shared understanding. With regard to aspects of participants’ accounts that were of interest to me and that the speaker left out, I tended to let participants speak freely and go back to these aspects as they seemed to finish their
account. This was true especially for the first question that was formulated as a “story” (i.e., “please tell me the story of your professional development...”) in which the way participants constructed the narrative was of interest. That is, in addition to the content of participants’ accounts, I was also interested in the story-telling aspects of their narrative: How do they begin the story? Do they follow a chronological sequence or a non-linear structure? Do they provide explanations for choices made? As expected, during the analysis of the narratives I found these aspects considerably telling and illuminating. Thus, I attempted to participate in a non-intrusive manner, asking mostly clarifying questions and limiting more open-ended questions to when it felt appropriate. Naturally, the nature of my involvement varied with different participants. For instance, I provided more clarifying comments to participants who were uncomfortable with the open-ended and ambiguous nature of the questions. I found that I asked more insight-oriented questions with participants who focused on the more concrete aspects of their story, attempting to understand the meaning of certain events or choices. In contrast, I assumed a more active listening stance with participants who did place their story more clearly within a meaningful framework. These variations in my interviewing style and the “push and pulls” I experienced during certain interviews were considered part of the data.27

Overall, during the period of interviewing, while I noticed some repeated themes across participants (e.g., frustration with the financial situation, the interplay of chance occurrences and intentional actions in impacting their journey), I had no specific observations with respect to the question of identity formation. My predominant experience was one of recognition and appreciation of the richness and uniqueness of people’s stories.

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27 Following each interview I briefly recorded my own experience during the interview and reactions toward the interviewee.
Following the interview, I asked participants to fill out two questionnaires, the background information questionnaire and the Ego Identity Process Questionnaire (EIPQ). The background information questionnaire was developed for the purpose of this study to obtain information about participants, including demographics, qualities of training programs, clinical experience, current stage in training, and theoretical orientation. For a copy of the questionnaire, followed by elaboration of the rationale behind certain questions, please see Appendix B. As noted, the EIPQ questionnaire (Balistreri, Busch-Rossnagel, & Geisinger, 1995) was not used as initially intended. For its psychometric description and the evolution of its inclusion in this study, please see Appendix C.

Data Management

Prior to the interview each participant was assigned an ID number, which was affixed to the informed content letter, the background questionnaire, and the EIPQ. The digital file of recorded interviews and later the transcribed interview were saved under that ID number as well. The only material that included both participants’ full names and IDs were the informed consent letter and a Word document tracking participants’ identities and ID numbers. Hard copies of the informed consent letter and the two questionnaires were kept in my private file cabinet in separate files.

Transcription

Recorded interviews were given for transcription to outside transcribers. Initially, four research assistants (undergraduate psychology students) were recruited via email for the purpose of transcription. They were carefully instructed regarding confidentiality and transcription requirements, especially as pertaining to the DAAP (See Appendix H) and were asked to sign a
confidentiality agreement (See Appendix I). The recorded interviews were identified by ID numbers alone, but naturally the interviews themselves contained potentially identifying information. Research assistants were paid $40 for each interview. Six interviews were transcribed in this manner. However, while the quality of the transcription was high, the pace was slow. Accordingly, the other 23 interviews were given to a professional transcriber who completed the task in three months. The latter transcriber too was instructed regarding transcription requirements and confidentiality. The resulting transcribed narratives from all sources were of high and consistent quality.\textsuperscript{28}

\textit{Data Analysis}

Research assistants who participated in different aspects of data analysis were exposed to material identified by ID numbers alone. Specifically, one primary research assistant worked with the two questionnaires, entering data into SPSS,\textsuperscript{29} and with several whole narratives. I read the narratives prior and removed identifying information, such as school and advisor’s names. Three other research assistants were exposed to short excerpts from the narratives from which identifying information had been removed. Beyond that, data were handled solely by me.

\textsuperscript{28} Two interviews, which were done at a café, were of decreased audible quality. They were transcribed by the professional transcriber. While the resultant narratives contained more unintelligible words compared to other narratives, they were overall clear and of good quality.

\textsuperscript{29} Data from the background information questionnaire and the EIPQ were entered twice, by myself and a research assistant, to monitor for accuracy.
CHAPTER V: ANALYTIC METHOD AND RESULTS

The analysis of data included two parts. The first and most central was the analysis of the entire data set (i.e., 29 interview narratives) using different qualitative methods and focusing on the study’s primary research question of how psychotherapist trainees develop their professional identities. This narrative analysis is the focus of this chapter.

The second part of data analysis was an inductive analysis (i.e., a modified version of grounded theory; Strauss & Corbin, 1998a, 1998b) I conducted of two interview questions, concerning the challenges trainees experience on their professional journey and trainees’ experience of their training environment. The findings from this analysis and discussion of results are presented in Appendix J.

In what follows, I will first describe the different analytic procedures I used in the analysis of the 29 narratives, along with the development of my ideas at each of these steps. I will then present the final formulation of the theoretical framework I have developed as a result of this analytic process. I will present six cases from the data to illustrate my ideas.

Analytic Strategy

The aim of attending carefully to the details, complexity, and contextualized meanings in the narratives can be achieved through a variety of methods. As my research questions were exploratory in nature, my data analysis strategy was flexible, consisting of a free interplay of analytic methods and techniques according to the changing needs of the theorizing process. That is, different phases in theorizing called for specific analytic methods appropriate to the aims of analysis at that point. Data analysis spanned a period of approximately two years.
Throughout the analysis, I worked with entire narratives, rather than with condensed narratives. Because of the exploratory nature of the study and the fact that interview questions touched on different aspects of identity formation, at the beginning stages of analysis all aspects of participants’ narratives were potentially significant. Attempts to reduce the data at a later stage of the analysis revealed that considerable parts of the texts were relevant for the subject of identity formation and thus, given the time investment it required relative to the gain, data condensation did not seem useful.

In the following sections, I will describe the various phases of data analysis and track the evolution of my ideas leading to their current formulation. A schematized and abbreviated figure of the different phases of analytic strategy is offered as a visual aid (See Figure 1 on the following page).

**Phase I: The Listening Guide**

Given the exploratory nature of my investigation and the amount of data that were available to me, I decided to begin analysis with a relatively small number of interviews and extend the analysis to the rest of the data as my inquiry became more focused. I reasoned that 10 interviews would be manageable in terms of the amount of data and would still allow for the emergence of variations and patterns, if such existed. Thus, I randomly chose 10 interviews and began analysis using the analytic method of the Listening Guide.

*The Listening Guide* is a multi-layered interpretive approach to qualitative data analysis, developed by scholars at the Harvard Graduate School of Education and used and adapted in diverse multi-disciplinary projects (Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, & Bertsch, 2003). It centers on

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30 I arbitrarily selected 10 Word files out of the 29 files in that folder.
Figure 1. The different phases of the analytic strategy.
“voice” as one of the primary ways inner thoughts and feelings can be communicated to an outside audience and allows researchers to attune to two or more different “voices” threaded throughout narratives in interview data. Through multiple and successive readings of the same text, “each time listening in a different way” (Brown, 1998, p. 33), it allows researchers to attend to the latent and less evident aspects of speech, which results in layered research results versus distinct, variable-like categories.

I chose to use this analytic method for several reasons. First, its underlying assumptions about the nature of subjective experience as relationally constructed are consistent with my own thinking. It acknowledges that multiplicity is an expected aspect of the psyche and in its emphasis on several different readings and identification of multiple “voices,” it allows for the discernment of shifts in self-states and modes of experience (Sorsoli & Tolman, 2008). I also appreciated the particular qualities of each type of reading, which allow access to various, sometimes more implicit, aspects of the narratives. Finally, while allowing considerable freedom, its successive steps also create some sense of structure, which I needed as I approached this considerably ambiguous, open-ended endeavor.

The method of the Listening Guide involves four steps (throughout each reading, I highlighted relevant passages and inserted notes along with the narratives). The first “listening” is a reflexive reading of the narrative, equally emphasizing the plot and the listener’s responses to the interview. It combines the basic grounded theory question of “what is happening here?” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998a, 1998b) with elements from narrative analysis, such as an interest in recurring words, themes, events, chronology of events, protagonists, plot, subplots, and key characters (Mishler, 1986). This was a very open reading of the narrative, focusing on the participants’ perspective and my reactions to the stories.
A second reading centers on the voice of the active “I” who is telling the story by following the use of this first-person pronoun and constructing “I-Poems.” This type of listening amplifies the participant’s first-person voice—its distinctive cadences and rhythms—and highlights how this person speaks about him- or herself, as well as where he or she might be emotionally or intellectually struggling to say something. This step was helpful in identifying repeated themes and sensitizing me to their relative occurrences and to potential relationships among them. For instance, in one interview a recurrent phrase was the combination of “I” and the verb “to know,” usually “I know” versus “I don’t know.” It was also very apparent that “I don’t know” appeared much more frequently and in the present tense while the “I know” was sporadic and less attainable (e.g., “I want to know;” “how do we know?”). Working with the I-poems, I noticed that all 10 interviews contained such repeated dialectical themes representing opposite modes of experience with which participants engaged. While certain themes repeated across interviews, they were typically phrased somewhat differently by different participants, reflecting each participant’s unique perspective. Examples include: structure-lack of structure, opening-closing, questioning-answering, understanding-not knowing, and confusion-clarity.

These two steps, the reflexive reading and the I-poems, provided the context for the third step—listening for contrapuntal voices—in which I began to identify and sort out the different strands in each interview that may speak to the primary research question of how this individual goes about developing his or her identity as a psychotherapist. This step entailed several readings, each time attuning to one aspect of the story being told. Specifically, all 10 interviews were initially read from the perspective of identity and professional development, focusing on

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31 The first-person “I,” along with the verb and any seemingly important accompanying words, are selected and placed in sequence, line after line in the same order they appear in the text, like lines in a poem. These guidelines are intended to foster a process of following the free-fall of associations (Gilligan et al., 2003).
issues such as moments of decision-making, exploration of alternatives for identifications, development of attitudes and beliefs, developmental challenges and conflicts, changes in identifications and commitments, influential aspects of training, and so on. This reading was informed by the literature on identity formation and psychotherapists’ professional development, which sensitized to me to certain themes (e.g., exploration, commitments, development of theoretical orientation).

Each interview was then read for the pairs of dialectical themes I had identified in the previous steps.\textsuperscript{32} Passages reflecting relevant themes were highlighted in two different colors (i.e., one for each dialectical theme) and the interrelations among various themes were explored (e.g., what is the relation between knowing and confusion in the narrative? Is knowing sought for immediately following confusion? What is the more prevalent experience?).

In the final step, having gone through each text a minimum of four times, leaving a trail of underlining, notes, and summaries each time, I pulled together what I had learned about this person in regard to the research questions and, more generally, what had been learned from listening to the different voices of different participants about their professional identity development. I summarized my impressions of each participant in a table that included a written summary of how I understood at this time the ways in which this person developed a professional identity. The table also included additional categories that I identified as potentially relevant to the process of identity formation and to professional development: recurrent themes, learning style, salient emotions, reason for choosing the psychotherapy profession, way of developing a theoretical orientation, understanding of one’s work in psychotherapy, and aspects

\textsuperscript{32} Several interviews included more than one pair of dialectical themes.
of story-telling. There was variation in terms of how elaborated my entries were for each category across interviews, with some categories left open for certain interviews.

As I reviewed this table that summarized my impressions of the initial analysis of the 10 interviews, I began to identify some similarities and differences among interviews. Certain narratives seemed to “go together.” These individuals appeared to share something in their approach to identity formation, suggesting the possibility of clusters. However, further analysis was clearly needed to better understand these commonalities and distinctions.

**Phase II: Thematic Coding - Searching for Specific Themes and Categorizing**

Reviewing the findings from Phase I and focusing on the similarities and differences among interviews, I identified three themes as potentially important in understanding and differentiating the emerging clusters: “Ambiguity,” “exploration,” and “commitments.” Specifically, six out of the 10 interviews were marked by recurrent dialectical themes involving the quality of ambiguity, such as confusion-clarity, knowing-not knowing, formulating-not formulating, and structure-unstructured. In addition, my thinking about the nature of the process of identity formation as a process of interpretation and formulation of ambiguous experiences, taking place in ambiguous cultural and professional contexts, was consistent with these initial observations and encouraged me to further explore this theme in relation to the emerging clusters.

Similarly, reviewing my written impressions of each narrative, the various ways in which the different participants explored the training environment, and entertained, took in, or alternatively rejected ideas, roles, skills, and so on, appeared to be primary in differentiating among narratives or linking them. My familiarity with the identity literature in which the
dimensions of exploration and commitments occupy a central role surely impacted my reading of the narratives, sensitizing me to certain themes and possibly blinding me to others. These constructs also spoke to me intuitively as inherent aspects of developing an identity. Of particular interest to me with respect to these constructs were their interrelations with other categories I identified in the initial analytic phase (i.e., The Listening Guide) that were noted above (e.g., learning style, salient emotions, way of developing a theoretical orientation), as well as new emerging categories of interest. For example, I wondered how the “learning style” of people (a phrase several participants used with respect to their professional development) is related to exploration and commitments. Is learning not a process in which individuals are exposed to different stimuli and internalize them in their own unique ways? Can identity be thought of as a process of learning? Another question that seemed to be relevant was how individuals engage with difference and similarity as they explore the environment and make commitments. While some individuals appeared to make commitments more easily to ideas they found congruent, others became excited about ideas and experiences that were new and at times foreign.

Thus, keeping in mind the three categories of ambiguity, exploration, and commitment, I read each of the narratives again, highlighting passages pertaining to these overarching categories. I also documented my thought process, inserting notes alongside the narratives. I then copied the highlighted passages and pasted them into a separate table, identifying and assigning them to various sub-categories, which were broken down into additional sub-categories. Certain sub-categories appeared across all interviews, such as factors impacting decisions/commitments/engagements (though with a range in terms of categories within these
sub-categories), whereas others were specific to certain interviews such as prevalent emotions, openness to experience, and unintentionality/randomness (of the process of professional development).

Pulling together all that I had learned from the notes, highlighted passages, and summaries from Phases I and II, I wrote another, more focused (compared to the previous table created at the end of Phase I) summary for each interview, describing the form that identity formation seemed to take. This summary included a general impression of how this individual was going about developing his or her identity (with variation across interviews in terms of clarity of my conceptualization), as well as other related aspects of professional development that seemed to be important in that particular narrative, such as treatment of ambiguity, development of a theoretical orientation, understanding of one’s work in psychotherapy, and so on. As a result of this process, I identified four rudimentary clusters, representing potentially different ways of developing an identity (elaborated in the following section), with one to three interviews appearing to fall in each cluster (a few interviews were undecided, that is, could potentially belong in two clusters). No apparent relation among the clusters or an organizing framework was identified at this time.

**Phase III: Making Contrasts/Comparisons**

This third phase of analysis involved the use of a comparative approach in order to better understand the differences and similarities among the emerging clusters. Going back to the narratives, notes, and summaries from previous steps, I compared narratives that seemed to share a similar approach to identity formation and narratives that seemed to differ. Out of these

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33 There was variation in the highlighted passages in terms of the saliency of emotions. For certain interviews the individual’s emotional experience was a prominent theme, whereas for others it was not.
repeated comparisons, the qualities of each emerging cluster and distinctions among clusters became clearer and so did the classification of narratives into one of the four clusters. Four clusters were identified: Open to experience, reactive, meaning-maker, and structure-reliant.\(^3\)

The open to experience cluster is characterized by active exploration of new training experiences, enjoyment of novelty and excitement about the ambiguous and unpredictable nature of clinical work, receptivity to various ideas and perspectives, experimentation with a variety of professional roles and therapeutic techniques, and integration of multiple theoretical orientations and treatment modalities.

The reactive cluster is marked by a tendency to follow one’s emotional reaction in guiding choices and commitments, seeking intense emotional engagement and perfect match with one’s training environment, preoccupation with the role of psychotherapist, and appreciation of the guidance and feedback of supervisors and mentors.

The meaning-maker cluster involves active reflection and emphasis on self-awareness, using training experiences to better understand oneself and drawing on such self-knowledge in one’s clinical work, a sense of comfort with the role of the psychotherapist, appreciation for the complex and multilayered nature of human experience and clinical work, and preference for theoretical orientations that involve self-understanding and construction of meaning.

Finally, the structure-reliant cluster is characterized by appreciation for clarity, effectiveness, and consistency of training environment and clinical work, seeking specialization.

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\(^3\) Open to experience, reactive, meaning-maker, and structure-reliant are the terms that appear in the final formulation. I chose to use them here to maintain consistency and clarity. These four terms had different names at different stages of the analysis. For instance, structure-reliant was termed “need for structure,” meaning-maker had several alternative names, including “know yourself,” “reflective,” and “traveler.” Reactive was named “emotional,” “intuitive,” and “experience-near.” Open to experience is the original term used.
and expertise, preference for structured and evidence-based treatment models, and tendency to adopt a primary theoretical orientation.

Of the 10 interviews, three were classified as open to experience, three as reactive, two as meaning-maker, and two as structure-reliant. Initially these four clusters seemed distinct and unrelated. In a moment of insight, I came to conceptualize them as emphasizing different aspects of the process of identity formation. That is, I reasoned that while all trainees explore the training environment, react to it emotionally, process their experience to some extent, and make commitments, different individuals privilege one aspect over others, resulting in four different approaches to identity formation. Specifically, open to experience represents an emphasis on exploration and experimentation with various training experiences; the reactive cluster privileges the individual’s emotional reactions to external experiences; the meaning-maker emphasizes the processing of these emotional reactions; and structure-reliant focuses on the commitments to certain ideas, ways of working, and professional roles. In addition, two pairs of clusters were differentiated in terms of treatment of ambiguity. Specifically, open to experience and meaning-maker represent high ambiguity tolerance (i.e., exploring novel and unknown external and internal territories, respectively) and reactive and structure-reliant represent preference for clarity (i.e., seeking emotional clarity and establishing structure in the environment, respectively).

35 Several interviews had a few qualities that were consistent with another cluster (for example, an interview classified as open to experience had some qualities of the meaning-maker). However, interviews tended to be more clearly consistent with one classification.
Return to Theory

At this stage of the analysis, I went back to the literature to read about various constructs that bore resemblance to the four evolving clusters with the aim of defining them more clearly through comparison to similar concepts. Thus, I read about openness to experience (Duriez & Soenens, 2006; Fowers & Davidov, 2006; McCrae & Costa, 1997; Olson, 2007; Widiger & Trull, 1997), need-for-structure (Elovainio & Mivimaki, 2001; Leone, Wallace, & Modgil, 1999; Meiser, & Machunsky, 2008; Neuberg & Newsom, 1993), experience-near (Averill, 1997; Murray, 1990) and self-reflection/reflective functioning (Berzonsky & Luyckx, 2008; Fonagy, Gergely, Jurist, & Target, 2002; Joireman, Parrott, & Hammersla, 2002), going back and forth between the data and my interpretations of them and the literature. This process gradually helped me to clarify the differences and similarities between my evolving clusters and these pre-existing constructs and thus to more clearly define my ideas.

At the end of this process, I described each cluster along several dimensions. I identified these dimensions out of the various analytic steps as potentially meaningful in characterizing the clusters and differentiating them from one another. These dimensions were: Main emphases/recurrent themes (in the narrative), self-environment relations, ambiguity treatment, exploration, making commitments, change in commitments, emotional level, cognitive level, behavioral level, view of clinical work and psychotherapist’s role, view of clients, theoretical orientation, and supervision. At this point in the analysis, I could not describe all clusters along all these dimensions, and certain dimensions were clearer for specific clusters than for others.
Phase IV: Replicating Findings across the Data Set

Following analysis of the 10 interviews and identification of the four clusters, I began reading additional interviews, keeping the developing clusters in mind and looking for the emergence of other potential clusters. As I was reading more interviews, while I did not identify additional clusters, I began to get a sense of a continuum of clusters. That is, interviews could mostly be classified to one of the four clusters, but at times appeared to represent a milder version of a particular cluster or to contain aspects of other clusters. This led to the recognition that a typology may not be the best or only way to organize the ideas I had developed thus far. Thus, I decided to deconstruct the clusters to better understand their interrelations and potentially identify underlying processes or constructs.

Working with a Research Assistant

During that time in the data analysis, in order to test and further develop my ideas, I began working with a research assistant (RA), a Master’s student in the Clinical Psychology program, who has a M.Sc. degree in Theoretical Psychoanalytic Studies and who was quite skillful with narrative interpretation. As I was examining my ideas across the entire data set, I gave the RA whole interviews and asked her to try to classify them to one, several, or none of the four clusters, and to track and document her thinking process (e.g., what helped her in classifying interviews? What did she find confusing or unclear in the theory? What steps did she follow in reaching a classification?). As my ideas changed so did the RA’s specific tasks; however, the common thread of her participation was engaging with me in the back-and-forth process between the data and my evolving interpretations of them and bringing her own input to the process. We had lengthy discussions about her reactions to and understanding of my ideas, her reactions to the narratives independent of my ideas, and her experience applying my ideas to the data. I
attempted to create a safe environment in which ideas could be freely shared and discussed. I found the RA’s input tremendously helpful; our discussions illuminated areas of theorizing that were less developed, and over time my thinking became clearer and more refined. Often, sudden insights occurred following such discussions.36

Phase V: Deconstructing the Clusters

As noted earlier, following my recognition that the data might be best conceptualized on a continuum of ways of forming identity rather than as distinct categories, I decided to deconstruct the emerging clusters to better understand their components—their differences, similarities, and interrelations. Thus, I went back to the dimensions along which each cluster was delineated at the end of Phase III (e.g., Main emphases/recurrent themes, self-environment relations, ambiguity treatment, exploration, and making commitments; see p. 91). I explored these dimensions within clusters and across clusters, seeking to identify categories that may represent underlying processes or constitute a continuum of some sort. I rewrote the clusters in terms of various dimensions, searching for differences, similarities, and redundancies. For instance, I examined whether the apparent differences among the clusters could be captured by the dimensions of exploration and commitments; I explored whether ambiguity treatment was an essential aspect differentiating clusters or could be incorporated into other dimensions. This was a long process in which the relationships between various dimensions were continuously reconfigured and reconceptualized. In what follows, I will describe the main theoretical developments that occurred at this phase, leading to my more recent thinking about this subject.

36 I worked with the RA for about 10 months until my ideas were well developed, at which point I began developing a coding system to further examine their reliability. My ideas continued to evolve and change in form throughout the writing process.
Important Theoretical Developments

The following theoretical developments were the result of the continuous interplay among the data, my changing conceptualizations of the data, discussions with the research assistant, and sudden insights.

**External versus internal focus.** One important development was my identification of two intertwined processes of identity formation, one taking place in the external world and the other internally. This realization came out of my attempt to better understand the differences among the four clusters, especially between open to experience and meaning-maker, which seemed to share certain qualities. As I was exploring their differences and similarities I realized that they indeed were similar in certain ways, but that open to experience was more directed towards the external world, whereas meaning-maker was more focused on the internal world. Going back to typical interviews of the four clusters, it became apparent that narratives I classified as open to experience or structure-reliant were more outwardly oriented, emphasizing experiences in the external world, whereas narratives I identified as reactive or meaning-maker were focused on inner experience. For instance, open to experience narratives emphasized the exploration of the external training environment, and structure-reliant narratives often referred to the act of making long-lasting commitments to engagements, ideas, and activities that are also “in the world.” In contrast, meaning-maker and reactive narratives appeared to be more internally oriented, emphasizing reflection and following one’s internal emotional reactions in making choices, respectively.

**Challenges to identity formation.** Another important theoretical development was the identification of three primary challenges to identity formation, which I termed ambiguity, complexity, and constant change. These three categories emerged out of the original category of
ambiguity, which I identified as an important theme in many narratives. As I was exploring participants’ treatment of ambiguity and its relation to identity formation, I realized that what I was terming ambiguity included various, somewhat different qualities. Using a dictionary and going back to the literature to better understand the concept of ambiguity (Frenkel-Brunswik, 1949; Tegano, 1990), I came to identify three distinct individual characteristics of ambiguity tolerance, appreciation of complexity, and flexibility. Studying these qualities in the context of the interviews, I initially came to conceptualize them as individuals’ responses to the external challenges of ambiguity, complexity, and constant change, which training and clinical practice pose to trainees as they develop their identities. As I came to distinguish between clusters that focus on internal versus external levels, these challenges were also conceptualized at the internal level as qualities of trainees’ subjective experience. That is, my thinking was that the external training environment can be subjectively experienced by trainees as ambiguous, complex, and in constant flux, with different trainees potentially having different experiences of the same environment. Accordingly, the ways in which trainees manage their internal experience can be conceptualized in terms of ambiguity tolerance, appreciation of complexity, and flexibility.

I came to understand the four clusters as representing different responses to these internal and external challenges. Specifically, open to experience and meaning-maker represented dealing with the external (open to experience) and internal (meaning-maker) challenges by tolerating ambiguity, appreciating complexity, and flexibly adapting to change (hence the similarity I identified between them in earlier phases of analysis). In contrast, structure-reliant and reactive

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37 I use these three terms to represent a range of related qualities. For example, ambiguity tolerance refers to the ability to venture into unknown territories, tolerate confusion and not knowing; complexity tolerance refers to the ability to cope with multiple perspectives, contradictions, and complex relations. Flexibility can refer to adaptation to change and permeability of boundaries. I discuss this issue in more detail in Appendix K.
represented coping with these challenges by seeking clarity, simplicity, and stability in their external experience (structure-reliant) and internally (reactive).

As a last revision to the final theory, with the aim of reducing the level of complexity of the resultant theoretical framework, I placed the discussion about the three categories of ambiguity, complexity, and constant change in Appendix K. In the delineation of the theory I describe the challenges that trainees encounter in terms of trainees’ reported experience, using trainees’ terms, but I do not elaborate on the qualities of ambiguity, complexity, and constant change that underlie these challenges.

Dialectical process of differentiation-separation. Finally, going back to relevant narratives to better understand the distinction between the external and internal emphases, which were clearly intertwined, I came to reconceptualize these emphases as the dialectical processes of differentiation and psychological separation, respectively.\(^38\) Specifically, I conceive of differentiation as involving the development of the set of skills, ideas, attitudes, and ways of working as a result of trainees’ interactions with their external environment. I conceptualize psychological separation as trainees’ subjective sense of themselves as psychotherapists with unique presence and style. Psychological separation is conceived to involve two reciprocal/dialectical aspects of emotional distance from experience and reflection.\(^39\) Referring to

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\(^{38}\) I first conceived of the process of differentiation as I was comparing a structure-reliant interview to an open to experience interview and recognizing their different emphases on commonality and sameness versus difference and uniqueness, respectively. That is, the two clusters appeared to occupy different positions with regard to differentiation, the former looking to obtain sameness and similarity to others, and the latter aiming to uniquely define oneself. Being familiar with Mahler’s separation-individuation theory, following this realization about differentiation, the process of psychological separation immediately came to mind as possibly corresponding to “my” internal process (see the following footnote).

\(^{39}\) In attempting to understand the differences between reactive and meaning-maker clusters, two interrelated qualities of emotional distance from experience and reflection emerged. It was unclear to me if they were two aspects of the same quality or two independent qualities. Going back to the literature did not resolve this issue for me. The relation between these two concepts came into place with the idea of differentiation, followed by the
the literature on separation-individuation (Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1974) and going back to the data, I came to define these processes more clearly and distinguish them from the original process of separation-individuation as conceptualized by Mahler.\footnote{At the most basic level, my conceptualization differs from that of Mahler (Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1974) in terms of the domain and population it involves. Mahler described a supposedly universal developmental process that begins in infancy and continues through toddlerhood, whose essence is the development of the child out of a stage of symbiosis with the mother towards independence and the establishment of a rudimentary sense of identity. My focus is on adult identity, and specifically the professional identity of psychotherapists in training. For Mahler, separation concerned the growing sense of psychological independence from the mother (in relation to the growing physical separation), and individuation referred to the development of a sense of self (referring to physical maturation and acquisition of new skills and capacities). My concepts are similar, yet different. My concept of psychological separation can be thought of as separating from the “parental” figures of mentors and supervisors, but emphasizes more the subjective experience of trainees and their active role in developing separation through reflection. My concept of differentiation, similar to individuation, involves the acquisition of (therapeutic rather than physical and cognitive) skills and capacities.}

To summarize, at that point in the analysis, the process of identity formation was conceived to be a process of separation-differentiation, operating both internally (i.e., through psychological separation) and externally (i.e., through differentiation). My analysis of the data suggested that while trainees develop at both levels (as both levels were present in all narratives), in constructing their identities as psychotherapists certain trainees appeared to be more internally focused whereas others seemed more externally oriented. In addition, the data suggested that participants vary in their responses to external and internal challenges of ambiguity, complexity, and constant change. At this point in the theorizing process I thought of the four clusters as examples of the end-points of two intersecting continuums (See Figure 2): One continuum represents the range from emphasizing primarily the internal level of identity formation (i.e., psychological separation) to focusing predominantly on the external level of identity formation (i.e., differentiation). The other continuum refers to trainees’ responses to the internal and
external challenges of ambiguity, complexity, and constant change, ranging from ambiguity tolerance, appreciation of complexity, and flexibility, to seeking clarity, simplicity, and stability.

Figure 2. The four identity clusters as a function of emphasis on internal/external levels and responses to internal/external challenges.

Phase VI: Looking for Discrepant and Contradictory Evidence

Going over the entire data set for the third time, searching for contradictory data and refining my ideas, I was again confronted by the complexity of the narratives. Specifically, I realized that many narratives reflect, though to varying degrees, responses to the challenges of
ambiguity, complexity, and constant change, at both the internal and external levels. That is, the
data suggested a more complex picture than the above figure portrays. In addition, as I was
engaging in the value-laden aspects of my theory (e.g., placing structure-reliant and reactive
individuals at the “lower” end of responses to primary challenges—seeking clarity, simplicity,
and stability), I recognized the importance and necessity of both ends of responses. That is, the
capacities to understand, to simplify complex situations, and to make stable commitments are not
less important for identity formation and psychotherapy work than ambiguity tolerance,
appreciation for complexity tolerance, and flexibility. This process led me back, in a moment of
sudden insight (as was the case with most major theoretical developments), to the idea of
dialectics, which was present for me throughout the analysis—at times in the foreground of my
thinking (e.g., in the identification of dialectical themes in the initial analysis), at others times in
the background. This idea, serving as an overarching framework, allowed for the integration of
my ideas in a way that I hope does justice to the complexity and richness of the narratives and
subject matter. I will elaborate on this idea as I present the most recent formulation of my theory.
Briefly, it shifted the focus from individuals’ occupation of a particular identity cluster to
individuals’ ability to shift among and occupy simultaneously different modes of experience.

In what follows I will describe the final major theoretical development, which took place
as I was writing my ideas, struggling to find a way to organize them in relation to one another in
a way that would make them accessible and clear. I will then describe my most recent thinking
about the subject of identity formation of psychotherapists in training.

Final Evolution: Identity Tasks

The final evolution in my theory was not a change in conceptualization as much as a
change in presentation. It came about as I was attempting to describe to a colleague, who was
familiar with an older version of my theory, my most recent conceptualization. Struggling to convey my ideas in simpler, more accessible terms, I delineated the theory by breaking it into three parts: the trainee, the context, and the interaction between them. Focusing on the trainee as he or she develops an identity, I spontaneously came to phrase it in terms of four basic activities: exploration, making commitments, reacting emotionally to experiences, and reflecting on one’s experience and making meaning. I later termed these four activities *identity tasks*. These terms were in fact a return to an earlier idea (see p. 93) in which I conceptualized the four (at the time, emerging) clusters as representing an emphasis on one of these four aspects involved in identity formation. The integration of this later development with previously presented developments constitutes my most recent thinking about this subject and is delineated in full in the following section.

The Identity Formation of Psychotherapists in Training: A Theoretical Framework

One of my lessons from this study is that the process of identity formation of psychotherapist trainees is complex, unique, and non-linear. Each story offered fascinating insights into how psychotherapists become and develop that cannot be reduced to any one formula. That being said, my analysis of these data has yielded an organizing framework that I believe can be useful in thinking about this subject.

I think of identities as emerging (continuously) out of the interactions between individuals (i.e., psychotherapist trainees) and their environment (i.e., the cultural and professional contexts in which they operate).\(^42\) My goals in embarking on this study were to

\(^{41}\) In the final formulation of my ideas I came to term the clusters *identity configurations*.

\(^{42}\) With regard to training programs, the process of selection of students deals with the aspect of individuals’ unique attributes. My starting point follows the phase of admission. Accordingly, my theory deals with the encounter
understand these interactions and the identities that emerge out of them, in all their complexities and variations, and to apply this understanding to the area of training with the aim of enhancing trainees’ professional development. Accordingly, I here present my ideas by looking at the context, the individual, and the interaction between them. Specifically, the first perspective I will focus on is that of the professional and cultural contexts in which trainees develop their identities as psychotherapists. One of my main motivations in pursuing this project was my sense that the current psychotherapy field and cultural circumstances pose considerable challenges to identity formation. In this section I will discuss this context from the perspective and lived experience of trainees.\footnote{I presented my own perspective, supported by research and theory, about the challenges current cultural and professional circumstances pose to the identity formation of psychotherapist trainees in Chapter II (Literature Review).} This portrayal will serve as a background for the subsequent discussion in which I focus on the perspective of the individual trainee who operates within that context, creating and re-creating an identity through the performance of four identity tasks: exploring, committing, feeling, and reflecting. I will show that through the performance of these tasks, trainees come to define the set of skills, ideas, and attitudes that sets them apart from other psychotherapists and to develop a sense of themselves as psychotherapists with unique therapeutic style and presence through a dialectical process I term differentiation-separation. Finally I will show how all these components come together in the service of identity construction. That is, I will focus on the interaction between the individual trainee and the professional and cultural contexts and the identities that are re-created in that dialectical tension. I will propose that individuals perform identity tasks in ways that are responsive to the context and its particular challenges, resulting in different ways of forming identities, which I term identity configurations (previously labeled...
clusters). I understand these identity configurations as various outcomes of the encounter between individuals with specific qualities\textsuperscript{44} and a context with certain characteristics. Such identity configurations can be thought of as different solutions individuals arrive at in dealing with professional and contextual challenges. I will present several such identity configurations, along with case illustrations. In the Discussion chapter, I will explore the ways in which training programs can promote better, more resilient, solutions.

General note. The fact that data are derived from interviews that were conducted at a certain point in time limits the kind of interpretations that can be made about the development of identities over time. Nevertheless, the theoretical framework I have developed includes ideas and concepts that are closely related to the data, offering a certain organizing perspective on the data, as well as speculations about the path that identities and professional development may take over time. The latter is based on the analysis of narratives of advanced trainees, which constitute 69.0\% (i.e., 20) of the data set. These narratives, which cover an extended period of time, depict a relatively lengthy developmental process and a more consolidated therapeutic repertoire, thus allowing speculation about characteristic ways of forming identities over time and possible resultant professional paths.

*The Perspective of Context: Professional and Contextual Challenges*

Trainees’ professional identities are developed in particular social-cultural contexts and professional circumstances. In the Literature Review chapter I presented the challenges trainees face on their professional journey, both as I see them and as suggested by relevant theory and empirical research. I argued that psychotherapists in training have to figure out a way of working

\textsuperscript{44} Throughout the discussion of my ideas I refer to trainees’ characteristics/abilities that preexist training and impact trainees’ approach to identity formation. These are qualities that differentiate trainees from one another, such as personality traits, talents, and skills.
with clients while encountering considerable human diversity, adjusting to clients’ constantly changing needs, and having multiple treatment approaches to choose from, along with a growing awareness that there is no one right way to go about it. I understand these challenges to identity to be familiar modern challenges, which have become heightened and accelerated by the advent of technology and the accompanying social saturation, making this an interesting time to look at the process of identity formation.

In what follows I will describe the training environment with its unique challenges from the perspective of trainees, including quotes from the narratives for illustration.\textsuperscript{45} Quotes are taken from the parts of the narratives in which participants discussed current challenges and concerns on their way to becoming professionals and evaluated their training programs. In Appendix K I deconstruct this portrayal, expressed here in terms that are closer to trainees’ experience, and discuss the qualities of ambiguity, complexity, and constant change that underlie trainees’ reported challenges (these qualities were identified in the analysis of the narratives as characterizing trainees’ experience in training). In addition, Appendix J presents the results of an inductive analysis of trainees’ accounts of the challenges they experience in a more systematic way.\textsuperscript{46}

\textsuperscript{45} In this discussion quotes are included to bring the descriptions to life and closer to trainees’ lived experience as told. Quotes are presented in a decontextualized format for purposes of brevity. At a later section, six whole cases will be described more fully to illustrate the ideas presented. For clarity purposes, throughout the manuscript, participants’ utterances that seemed to interfere with the flow of reading (e.g., Hmm, uh, like) and were insignificant in terms of the content were removed from quotes.

\textsuperscript{46} The inductive analysis includes the prevalence of different themes along with reference to training stage. The following discussion does not describe the challenges trainees report according to developmental stage in training (except for accompanying the quotes with speaker’s gender and training stage).
Professional and Developmental Challenges – Trainees’ Perspective

In the narratives, participants expressed, both directly and indirectly, the various challenges they experienced on their professional journey, touching on aspects pertaining to psychotherapy work, professional development, and the training environment.

Participants illuminated the considerable uncertainty and unpredictability they experienced as psychotherapists, never knowing what complexities and challenges a new client, the next session, or the next moment will bring. They struggle to attend to the multiple demands that the therapeutic interaction entails. They find themselves constantly adapting to new circumstances, feeling that different clients and different moments call for different kinds of involvement and presence. They are at times overwhelmed by the painful or intolerable feelings they experience with clients. Especially as relatively novice psychotherapists, they constantly negotiate the boundaries of their emotional involvement and personal responsibility for clients’ lives; they often question the effectiveness of psychotherapy work and their own competence and have difficulty accepting the limitations of their impact.

Greg, an advanced male trainee, described the always present challenge of dealing with the novelty, unpredictability, and complexity characteristic of psychotherapy work:

I would say being thrown a client that I’ve never had any experience with is a challenge... just learning how to work with a new client and all the challenges that they bring into the room with them... it’s one thing to read about narcissistic personalities or read about borderline or something, but it’s another thing to really go through the roller coaster of working with them... constantly being on top of my game... working with them in transference... there’s always in a sense more work than you think [laughs] in a therapy. I think there’s always more stuff that’s there than meets the eye, and I think that’s one of my challenges.
Susan, an advanced female trainee with a physical disability, spoke about the challenge of tolerating painful feelings in psychotherapy work and negotiating the boundaries between the personal and the professional when working with a population with whom she deeply identified:

I’m going to be working with… sick children, injured children. That’s the population I think that can tear on my heart strings more than any other… I can feel more deeply about them and I think that’s going to be a big challenge… how will I manage… probably my worst nightmare is that I’ll just like be really distraught and I’ll start crying and I won’t be able to pull myself together. That’s sort of like my surreal nightmare…

These examples from advanced trainees touch on challenges that are inherent to psychotherapy work regardless of stage in training, but are likely to be more difficult to negotiate for trainees who deal with multiple training demands and have limited clinical experience. For the beginner trainee especially, the need to attend to interactional demands and remain present can be considerably challenging, as Sue, a beginner female trainee, attested:

I think that it was hard for me in the beginning to figure out what to say… I would have like an internal dialogue. Like, oh my God, like what if I say this? And then I would go through a long list of possibilities and I would be repeating things and trying to edit it in my head, and meanwhile I wasn’t listening to the client, and so I had to figure out a way to be more comfortable with myself and in the room so that that wouldn’t happen.

Going beyond the actual interaction in the therapy room, Nicole, a beginner female trainee, discussed the challenge of negotiating the boundaries of her therapeutic involvement, intensified by a precarious sense of competence:

I think through the years, I’ve learned to separate myself or try to separate myself from my clients’ lives and what they’re going through, but sometimes it’s very difficult to do that and I find myself thinking about them a lot, like during the week when I don’t see them and stressing about it. And I guess doubting that I’m doing a good job.
Similarly, Marion, an advanced female trainee, speaks about the challenge of recognizing the limits of the impact of psychotherapy in terms of her skill level, the complexity of the task, and current limitations of the trade:

I guess there are two parts to the story, I think from a more clinical perspective… I don’t feel that I have the really expertise yet to help somebody enough the way I would like to… but also part of it is because there is so much that we just don’t know in this field, and I think… about myself and people that I know, and I think therapy helped them, but not enough like, I guess my fantasy would be that therapy would be like an open heart surgery, you know, you come, and pretty much you’re fixed… and I think therapy is not like that because so many things we don’t understand and many of these is because of course people are so complicated, but also because I think the clinical work is not… always informed by research.

The particular nature of psychotherapy training, which combines academic, clinical, and research components, also proves considerably challenging. Participants reported that they constantly negotiate the multiple and different demands of coursework, research, and psychotherapy. The length of training and the many developmental trajectories it involves further intensify their frustration and anxiety. Accordingly, the attempt to find a desirable balance between the demands of training and other personal needs is a continuous challenge.

Nicole (a beginner female trainee) discussed the challenge of negotiating multiple training demands:

A biggest concern—but I know I’ll be able to do it—is just juggling all that we have to juggle. So it’s like conducting your Master’s research, seeing your clients and doing the paperwork, taking all your classes and then working just to make some money. Touching on the many trajectories that training involves, Nicole highlights the continuous (rather than the multiple) nature of training demands:
I feel like after I complete this program, I’m going to be like what do I do now? It’s like always a big hump to go over. There’s always an obstacle. It’s like when does it end? It’s like your first year, I was just eased into it and that wasn’t too bad. But then it’s the Master’s thesis project… so that’s a hump, and then the cert exam and then the comps exam. It’s so much stress and I guess what I’ve learned over the years, being in school, it’s like, okay, one day at a time.

These multiple and continuous demands challenge the ability to attend to personal needs, as Samantha, an advanced trainee attested:

It’s really a conflict and a challenge to balance having a personal life and having personal relationships, work life, additional employment, and having time for myself. It’s demanding work and you really need time to take care of yourself.

Looking back from the more structured experience of internship, Tina, an advanced trainee suggested the oppressive impact that such endless demands can have:

Work-life balance is a challenge for sure… I feel like I’m doing okay with it now. It was terribly hard in grad school… it’s so much easier now. Having some semblance of an eight-to-five job is so much easier than a 24-[hour] job as a grad student, and as much as the flexibility of the workdays in grad school was great, there was still always work I should be doing. And now there’s always work I could be doing [laughs] and not so much of a should or need to be. And it’s very liberating, very liberating.

Throughout their training, trainees attempt to make sense of their experiences and integrate what they absorb into a way of working therapeutically. Encountering a variety of supervisors, professional settings, and theoretical perspectives, they struggle to remain receptive to what they learn while finding their own unique voice. They try to figure out how to be professionals among other professionals, as they are constantly changing roles—from student to psychotherapist, to supervisee, to researcher, to client. They grapple with the unknown nature of their professional future, uncertain what kind of job opportunities will be available for them upon graduation and which path of many to pursue.
Greg, (an advanced male trainee) described the challenge of figuring out his own way of working in psychotherapy vis-à-vis his supervisors:

… just trying to find my own way versus the supervisor’s way, and how do you meld those and come out with something that’s good, both real helpful to the client and also, you know, feeling satisfied, both you and the supervisor… in a sense that is a separation-individuation issue because… at the same time that you’re being taught by a supervisor, you’re also trying to form your own identity as a therapist, and I think that trying to separate what you’re comfortable with… what the supervisor’s comfortable with… but at the same time, having room to do it your own way I think is something that’s been challenging… And I think now that I’m more experienced it’s actually been more challenging.

Sue (a beginner female trainee) described the challenge of transitioning between different, professional and non-professional, roles:

… everything is just so casual at school that it’s easy to be non-professional or unprofessional. So it’s just something that we constantly have to be aware of and try to work through… especially when you go into the clinic… you have to be careful about what you’re wearing and things like that and it’s hard… it feels kind of disparate ‘cause at school, while they’re down the street from each other and there is some separation, like here I can spike my hair up if I want [laughs], I can, you know, wear holey jeans.. But at the clinic it’s totally different.

Approaching the end of training and about to assume a professional role, Amy, an advanced female trainee, described the challenges and losses involved in this change:

I’m really ending the phase of being a student… Into sort of a professional role where I’m going to be a supervisor, I’m going to be a professor… and as much as it excites me to be in a role of sort of like a mentor and a supervisor and all that, that comes with a lot of pressure and responsibility and expectations that I have for myself as well as from other people. And I’ve been very much sort of struggling with that challenge or that change… I’m not going to be a student anymore ‘cause I’ve always been a student all along. And so it’s almost like, oh, like I’m not going to be a child anymore!

Touching on a different aspect of becoming a professional, an advanced female trainee, discussed the challenge of finding her place in the field:

I mean the challenges really have to do with my sense of this field, you know, as a whole and… how I want to participate in this field. The challenge is seeing things that I don’t
like around me at times or feeling frustrated by them… it’s hard, you know, because I want my professional life to be really fulfilling. I don’t want to do things that I don’t want to do and I have other interests, you know, that I want to be able to pursue…

Similarly, Eric, an advanced male trainee reported struggling to figure out his professional path, debating between two different professional options that psychotherapy training affords:

Just knowing what I want to do with my life or whether or not I want to go into practice full-time or academia full-time is a challenge.

In sum, participants described an experience of dealing with considerable ambiguity and uncertainty in psychotherapy work and of having to make sense of complex and always changing data. They have to constantly negotiate multiple demands and attempt to define themselves as they are in constant interaction with others (clients, supervisors, mentors) and to figure out the nature of their participation. The challenges are numerous, diverse, and enduring.

*From the Context to the Individual Trainee: Responses to Professional and Contextual Challenges*

Within these professional and training contexts, trainees learn and develop their sense of self as psychotherapists as they cope with the multitude of challenges that these contexts present. Having their unique abilities, inclinations, strengths, and areas of challenge, different trainees cope differently with these challenges. The responses of participants in my sample to these challenges ran the entire gamut, ranging from attempts to minimize or avoid these challenges to embracing them. That is, the data suggest that while certain trainees attempt to structure psychotherapy work and minimize some of the ambiguity and complexity inherent in the work, others enjoy its unpredictable and multilayered nature, finding it a source of creativity and self-growth. Similarly, while some trainees seek more consistent and familiar training experiences,
such as gaining in-depth training in a particular treatment modality, others enjoy venturing into new territories and experimenting with a variety of ideas, professional roles, and ways of working. What appears to underlie these different responses is a constantly changing balance between individual capacities and the degree and nature of the challenges the training environment poses.

As they interact with their training environment, trainees develop their sense of self as psychotherapists through the performance of four identity tasks. I will take up this subject in more details in the following discussion.

The Individual Perspective: Identity Tasks

Working with the data I identified four identity tasks that trainees perform as they continuously create and re-create their identities as psychotherapists, which I termed exploring, committing, feeling, and reflecting.

Exploring refers to the act of venturing into new environments with the purpose of discovery, seeking and being exposed to different training experiences/stimuli, and considering various alternatives and options for self-definition and action. It involves receptivity and permeability of boundaries around the self. In the sample, there was considerable variation in terms of the scope of trainees’ exploration. The more wide-ranging the exploration, the greater the variety and diversity of experiences and ideas that trainees encounter and experiment with. Over time, the data suggest, such broad exposure sensitizes trainees to the existence of multiple perspectives and ways of working. It also has the potential, as trainees are exposed to different and sometimes contrasting ideas, to challenge trainees’ existing identifications, thereby leading to change.
While exploring is the potential for self-change, *committing* refers to the act of self-definition. In the data it manifested in the set of decisions, choices, clinical skills and knowledge, identifications, attitudes, and so on that trainees adopted or alternatively rejected. Making commitments is what allows for the development of a theoretical approach, deciding on a treatment course or a particular intervention, maintaining a therapeutic framework, and following up with professional engagements or treatment plans. It involves, at least temporality, the ability to achieve clarity when dealing with ambiguity, to make single choices in the face of complexity and multiple possibilities, and to maintain stability and consistency in the context of changing circumstances.

*Feeling* refers to the conscious emotions and feelings that trainees experience as they are involved in various training experiences and especially clinical work. It involves participation and emotional engagement in one’s experience. Such emotional experiences can be positive, negative, mixed, or ambiguous and can vary in terms of their intensity. In the narratives, trainees demonstrated a range of emotional reactions in response to professional demands and challenges, from sitting with confusion and uncertainty to achieving emotional clarity; from holding multiple, often contradictory, emotions to immersing in a single emotional experience; from maintaining emotional consistency to shifting between various emotional reactions.

*Reflecting* concerns the more delayed act of consciously and (usually) deliberately examining one’s subjective experience with the aim of understanding self and others and making meaning. While feeling involves connection to one’s environment, the act of reflection inherently involves some distance from one’s experience (for the purpose of observation) and recognition of difference. As individuals observe or think about their minds or the minds of others they are in essence acknowledging the separateness of these minds. The data suggest that
while psychotherapist trainees are on average reflective individuals, they differ in the extent to which they tend to process their experience in training to learn about themselves and others. Specifically, while certain narratives tended to be more concrete, entailing descriptive accounts of events, others were more reflective, including observations, interpretations, and meaningful associations. In addition, while certain narratives suggested that participants tend to actively process their experience, continually disrupting familiar ways of knowing, others were more indicative of a tendency to organize experience into stable and knowable patterns. This often manifested in the narratives in the existence of multiple self-conceptions and the entertainment of different possible meanings (e.g., providing different conceptions of the psychotherapist’s role each embedded in different clinical contexts) versus having a more unified and coherent framework (e.g., having a single and clearly defined conception of one’s role), respectively.

Similarly, with respect to the interview situation itself, participants differed in the extent to which they used this opportunity to produce new meanings (as distinguished from sharing preexisting observations or speaking more concretely).

Identity Formation: A Dialectical Process of Differentiation-Separation

My analysis of the data suggests that the identity tasks of exploring and committing and of feeling and reflecting are in a dialectical relationship to one another.

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47 This was not a linear relationship in which an apparent capacity for reflection was associated with greater meaning-making during the interview. I found that participants who appeared more reflective, in addition to sharing previously-arrived-at understandings, often used the interview to understand something new about themselves and enjoyed the process of reflecting on their experience. Individuals who tended to be more concrete did not appear to use this opportunity to reflect and often did not understand my more insight-oriented questions. However, the middle range—individuals whom I see as becoming increasingly more reflective as they advance in training (I will discuss this further later in this chapter)—while they did not tend to spontaneously reach new understandings, they did use my more insight-orientated questions to make new meanings and enjoyed such personal “discoveries.”
Figure 3. Dialectical identity tasks.

**Dialectics - Definition**

The term dialectics has a long history in Western thought\(^4^8\). My use of this term is influenced by contemporary psychoanalysis rather than Western philosophy. In current psychoanalytic parlance, the term dialectics is often used in relation to the nature of subjective experience and of the therapeutic process, which are understood to be characterized by a dynamic tension between two qualities. For example, Winnicott (1971) conceives of subjective experience to be created in the dialectic between the given (i.e., objective reality) and the made (i.e., our construction of reality). Similarly, Stern (1997) understands individual experience as the joint creation of interacting influences from within (i.e., internal world) and without (i.e., external reality; social world). External and internal influences are “a dialectic in constant flux,” continuously shaping and transforming each other (p. 6). He also thinks about time in dialectical

\(^{48}\) In the history of western thought the term dialectics has meant different things in different contexts. In the Western tradition dialectics is customarily considered to begin with Heraclitus, followed by Socrates. Aristotle then systematized the Socratic dialectics, treating it as a form of argument that fell somewhere between logic and rhetoric. By revealing the contradictions in particular arguments, one forces their modification or abandonment, thereby moving the contending parties closer to a rational consensus. This notion of dialectics continued to hold sway in Western philosophy throughout the medieval and early modern periods. A major shift in thinking about dialectics occurred with Kant for whom dialectics represents an endless series of debates in which each party reveals the contradictions of the other without resolution of its own contradictions. Following Kant, Hegel challenged the notion that opposed positions must be taken as complete and independent, suggesting that seemingly opposing propositions can be reconciled within an integrative framework that transcends the parts that constitute it (Ollman & Smith, 2008).
terms, understanding the past to be as much the creation of the present as the present is of the past. Hofmann (1998), who describes his way of working therapeutically as dialectical-constructivism, proposes a psychoanalytic modality in which there is “a dialectic between noninterpretive and interpretive interactions. Each has its place and each provides fertile ground for the emergence of the other” (p. xiii-xiv). Informed by these ideas, I use the term dialectics to point to the mutual influence that two activities or aspects of experience exert on one another and the novelty or transformation that can be brought about through the movement between them.

My use of the term dialectics bears some resemblance to Hegel’s dialectics, whose conceptualization is most commonly associated with the term. Hegel’s dialectics, rather than referring to a method of reasoning for resolving disagreement (as in classical philosophy), concerns the nature of reality. Hegel states that as long as contending positions are taken as complete and independent, the conflict between them is irresolvable. A better option, he argues, is to recognize that apparently opposed positions only offer one-sided account of a complex reality; ‘truth is the whole’ he famously claims and to be adequately comprehended we must find a place in our thinking to all these partial truths (Ollman & Smith, 2008). In his notion of dialectics there is movement to a positive result in which previously antagonistic positions are reconciled within a higher order framework, which conserves them and transcends them (Pinkard, 1987). I use the term dialectics not with respect to the nature of reality, but rather with regard to identity formation – the activities and processes through which psychotherapist trainees continuously recreate their identities.

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49 Such framework is usually presented as comprises three dialectical stages of development: a proposition (i.e., a thesis), a contending proposition (i.e., anti-thesis) and the tension between them is resolved by means of a synthesis (i.e., a third thesis). Hegel himself never used this specific formulation (Fox, 2005).
As the subject of my inquiry is different and much more narrow than that of Hegel’s, it is
difficult to compare the two conceptions of the term except in very general terms. Similar to the
spirit of Hegel’s dialectics, I do not view the identity tasks as independent activities but rather
interconnected and existing in a dynamic tension; sometimes one is figure and the other is
ground, and vice versa, each continuously shapes and defines the other. To fully comprehend
the process of identity formation, one has to understand the continually changing dynamic and
complementary relationships among the identity tasks. While I focus on the dialectical tension
between exploring and committing and feeling and reflecting, all four tasks interact with and
influence one another. In addition, somewhat similar to Hegel’s synthesizing framework, I
suggest that the movement between dialectical identity tasks produces a “higher-order” process
of identity formation, which I term differentiation-(psychological) separation. Whereas
differentiation develops in the dialectical tension between the identity tasks of exploring and
committing, psychological separation develops through the back and forth movement between
feeling and reflecting.

Specifically, as trainees explore the training environment and experiment with new ways
of thinking and working, they also make commitments to certain ideas, attitudes, and

50 When a dialectical tension is maintained among identity tasks, each task shapes and is impacted by another.
Specifically, exploration in the context of an ability to make commitment is a more active form of exploration in
which the receptivity to the influence of others results in a more deliberate search for opportunities for self-
definitions and excitement about discoveries that can potentially impact the self. In contrast, exploration with limited
commitments involves more passive exposure and experimentation. Similarly, making commitment in the context of
exploration results in continuous change and expansion of commitments as new stimuli are encountered and
considered. However, making commitments and limiting exploration result in stability, and in the extreme, rigidity,
of commitments. In a similar manner, reflecting while being emotionally engaged in one’s experience allows for the
construction of meanings that are personally resonant as opposed to a more analytical understanding of self and
other. Similarly, being emotionally engaged while maintaining observant capacities is presumed to represent a more
mutual way of being with others since there is greater ability to “see” others. In contrast, emotional engagement with
limited reflection suggests a more reactive position in which the ability to hold both oneself and others in mind is
compromised. The two pairs of dialectical tasks are also in a dialectical relationship to one another; exploration and
commitment that are made in the context of emotional engagement and reflection are more personally meaningful
than when they are not.
professional roles. While continuous exploration allows for exposure to a variety of possibilities for identification (i.e., it expands one’s horizons), the ability to commit allows self-definition. The data suggest that when trainees are able to flexibly shift\textsuperscript{51} between the two tasks, they allow for movement in their commitments, continuously expanding and changing their identifications.

\textbf{Differentiation}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\begin{tikzpicture}
\node (explore) at (0,0) {Exploring};
\node (commit) at (4,0) {Committing};
\node (feel) at (0,-1) {Feeling};
\node (reflect) at (4,-1) {Reflecting};
\draw[->] (explore) -- node[below] {Dialectical relationship} (commit);
\draw[->] (feel) -- node[below] {Dialectical relationship} (reflect);
\end{tikzpicture}
\caption{Differentiation and psychological separation.}
\end{figure}

Over time this results in the development of a therapeutic repertoire that is constantly evolving, multi-faceted, and, due to the extensive exposure to different stimuli, reflective of trainees’ particular professional journey.\textsuperscript{52} In other words, out of their experiences in the world, through a

\textsuperscript{51} Throughout the discussion I am using various phrases to refer to trainees’ ability to engage in several identity tasks at the same time (e.g., negotiate the tension, shift flexibly, hold together, back-and-forth movement). I see these phrases as interchangeable since, depending on the time unit, shifting among tasks and engaging in tasks simultaneously can mean the same thing. The underlying notion is that trainees do not limit their engagement in one or more identity tasks consistently across situations and can engage in different tasks flexibly according to changing circumstances. As I will state in a later section, I term this quality fluidity.

\textsuperscript{52} This idea was arrived at based on the narratives of advanced trainees. Advanced trainees, who demonstrated continuous exploration of various training experiences along with the ability to make commitments, appeared to develop a therapeutic repertoire that was complex, flexible, and reflective of their particular professional journey. These trainees typically described in their narratives the different experiences they went through and how these over time developed into a particular way of working; exposure to different stimuli and experimentation with different roles and activities helped to refine their interests. Their descriptions were characterized by excitement about new experiences and openness to change. The developmental path that emerged suggested continuous change and expansion. The narratives of advanced trainees also suggested a range in terms of the ability to shift fluidly between exploration and commitment, with decreased fluidity being associated with a therapeutic repertoire that was limited
continuous movement between exploring and committing, trainees come to differentiate themselves as psychotherapists with unique sets of skills, knowledge, theoretical orientation, treatment models, interests in specific clinical populations and presentations, values, and attitudes that characterize them and set them apart as psychotherapists. Differentiation concerns primarily observable qualities that one can show to the world, with attention focused outward. The data suggest that what underlies the ability to hold these two tasks in a dialectical relationship and move fluidly between them is trainees’ capacity to remain open to the impact of others.  

*Psychological separation* is a process in which trainees are increasingly able to interact with and respond to their training environment (e.g., supervisors, advisors, clients, clinical settings) as independent, yet connected, agents. While differentiation relates to the set of observable skills, knowledge, and interests that trainees adopt, psychological separation refers to trainees’ internal sense of themselves as psychotherapists. It concerns their subjective experience of themselves as different from other psychotherapists (e.g., supervisors, peers), having their unique internal world and therapeutic style and presence. It is about awareness of

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53 This individual capacity of remaining open to the influence of others in essence constitutes within it both exploration and making commitment. It involves seeking out and being exposed to others’ influence (i.e., exploring) and letting such influence in (i.e., committing).

54 In contrast to other professions where one may conceive the development of a professional identity at the level of differentiation alone, in terms of the acquisition of skills, knowledge, experience, and so on, for psychotherapists it is inseparable from the level of psychological separation. The boundary between the professional and personal identity is less clearly demarcated as it may be in other professions (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Moreover, for certain theoretical persuasions, and to a lesser degree in most schools of psychotherapy, the crux of clinical work happens in the intersubjective matrix of both client and therapist (Mitchell, 1993), underscoring the importance of the therapist’s subjectivity.

55 While therapeutic style is something that is expressed to the world, it is subjective and more ambiguous, and in that sense less observable than the adoption of skills and treatment models and the specialization in specific populations and clinical disorders – qualities that psychotherapists can state in a resume or a webpage.
one’s style, a sense of comfort with it, and tolerance of difference with respect to other psychotherapists.

Similarly to the way in which differentiation develops in the tension between committing and exploring, the data suggest that psychological separation grows out of the back-and-forth movement between *feeling* and *reflecting*. Through a continuous movement between immersing oneself in experience and connecting to others, and stepping back, observing, and making meaning of one’s experience, trainees begin to make sense of their therapeutic style (i.e., how they are similar to and different from others) and develop a sense of being subjectively unique as psychotherapists. They gradually become more familiar and more comfortable with their style. What underlies the ability to hold these two tasks in dialectical tension is the capacity to tolerate difference from others while remaining emotionally connected to them.

While the data suggest that moving fluidly among the dialectical identity tasks results over time in growing differentiation and psychological separation, I do not conceive of these processes as linear. Rather, periods of increased differentiation could potentially be followed by periods of reduced differentiation (e.g., learning a new treatment model and for a period of time, or permanently, working predominantly in this modality). Similarly, trainees’ tendency to actively reflect on their experience can change in different directions across contexts and over time (e.g., limiting reflection during internship, which demands focus on acquiring new skills).

Differentiation and psychological separation are also in a dialectical relationship to one another (Figure 5). They are intertwined and cannot be clearly distinguished and are in constant interaction; each is shaped and enriched by the other. Specifically, participants’ stories (especially of advanced trainees) indicate that as trainees encounter various training experiences
and adopt clinical skills, theoretical ideas, and professional attitudes (i.e., become more differentiated as psychotherapists), their subjective sense of being different from others and their familiarity with their unique therapeutic style also develop (i.e., a growing separation). Similarly, familiarity with their personal style, the ability to tolerate a sense of difference from others, and acceptance of their uniqueness as psychotherapists (i.e., separation) impact trainees’ participation in training, contributing to the adoption of clinical skills, knowledge, and attitudes in a way that is congruent with their way of working (i.e., increased differentiation). The dance between differentiation and separation can be thought of as the tension between enlargement of the self and acceptance of various aspects of self, respectively.

![Diagram](image)

*Figure 5. The dialectical processes of differentiation and psychological separation.*
The narratives suggest that what underlie this mutual influence between differentiation and psychological separation are the constant movement and the holding together of the four identity tasks of exploring, committing, feeling, and reflecting. I call this ability to shift easily among identity tasks with varying levels of alternation or simultaneity fluidity.

*Optimal Professional Development: Fluidity and Self-Awareness*

Working with the narratives and developing my ideas, I have come to conceive of optimal professional development as one in which the evolving identity meets the needs of both the individual trainee and the professional context.\(^56\) That is, optimally, trainees over time develop a way of working that is self-congruent, reflective of their strengths, interests, and sensibilities, as well as responsive to their areas of challenge and limitation.\(^57\) This in turn allows for a sense of *vitality* in one’s work, as trainees are able to fully capitalize on and give expression to their unique abilities, as well as grow and expand those skills as they challenge themselves and work through difficulties in a manner that fits them. In terms of the professional context, optimally, clinical settings would have clinicians who can deal *resiliently* with the setting’s particular clinical and professional needs and demands. This can be achieved through having a therapeutic repertoire that is broad and flexible, allowing clinicians to deal effectively with a range of presenting problems and populations.

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\(^56\) These conclusions I present here are based on my analysis of the narratives. Nevertheless, they constitute a certain leap from the data in the sense that what I have learned, along with my preexisting worldview, led me to these conclusions. These are offered as lessons or as a personal perspective I have arrived at as a result of my analysis of the data. In the following sections I will present six case illustrations in support of the view I am putting forward. In particular, a case study of “burn out” will be used to underscore my notions about optimal professional development.

\(^57\) This process of continuous self-learning and change is life-long; however, it is important that it begins in training, when trainees acquire not only skills and knowledge, but also potentially ways of learning and developing that continue with them into their careers.
I argue that such an optimal process of identity formation depends on trainees’ ability to shift fluidly among all four identity tasks, and more broadly between differentiation and psychological separation, resulting in the development of a therapeutic repertoire that is multifaceted, constantly evolving, flexible, and embedded in a developed sense of subjectivity.

Self-awareness. Another route to promoting a constructive interaction between self and context in which the needs of both are met is through trainees’ awareness of their therapeutic style—their strengths and limitations. Increased familiarity with their way of working, preferences, and interests would allow psychotherapists during and beyond their training period to choose clinical and other professional settings that match their skills and interests and where they can make valuable contributions. This is especially true for trainees whose exploration of training experiences is more focused (rather than broad), leading to a way of working that is similar to specialization. In these cases, awareness of one’s strengths and limitations can compensate for decreased range by allowing for suitable professional choices. This conclusion is informed by the recognition of the variation that exists among trainees with respect to fluidity, which, the data suggest, impacts their flexibility in dealing with a range of professional demands and challenges.

Variations. The analysis of narratives suggests that all trainees perform all four identity tasks and become more differentiated and psychologically separated as psychotherapists as they advance in their training; all narratives contained some aspects of both differentiation and psychological separation, addressing to varying degrees trainees’ experience in the world and their subjective sense of self, respectively. That is, I conceptualize differentiation and psychological separation to be normative developmental processes. That being said, the analysis of narratives also suggests that at certain times, situations, developmental stages, and for certain
personalities, the ability to engage in several identity tasks simultaneously or fluidly shift among them varies. Such variation is natural and often desirable. However, when trainees continuously struggle with fluidity and limit their engagement in one or a few identity tasks more consistently, professional development is compromised in the sense that trainees’ ways of working do not fit their abilities and sensibilities and/or are not effective in dealing with contextual challenges. This results in a discordant interaction between self and context in which both are compromised.

Specifically, the data suggest that trainees who leaned towards differentiation at the expense of psychological separation would be very present in the external world, exploring training experiences and developing skills and knowledge, but would lack a deeper understanding of their particular choices, limitations, strengths, and motivations. That is, the development of their clinical repertoire would not be embedded in a developed sense of subjectivity. Such an emphasis on the level of differentiation was manifested in the narratives in a focus on the different clinical and training experiences participants have had and the skills they acquired, but with limited integration of these experiences into a growing sense of who they are as psychotherapists (e.g., difficulty relating the techniques they use in therapy to a broader understanding of their role and, at a higher level, to the underlying motivations in pursuing a particular role).

Alternatively, my analysis suggests that trainees who focused more internally on psychological separation at the expense of differentiation would be deeply immersed in their internal world and aware of their therapeutic style, but restrict their engagement in the external

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58 While this may not be considered a problem in other professions, it is my view that psychotherapists have the responsibility to at least attempt to understand their actions and ways of thinking, as these have an impact on the people they serve (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003).
world and consequently limit acquisition of experience, skills, and knowledge. This in turn would impact trainees’ ability to cope effectively with the range of clinical presentations that psychotherapy, especially these days, involves. This manifested in the data more subtly in narratives focusing on internal processes and suggesting a relatively limited range of clinical and training experiences.

Similarly, within each process, when trainees struggle to maintain the tension between dialectical identity tasks, emphasizing one and limiting another, differentiation and psychological separation are hindered. Specifically, the data suggest that trainees who focused on committing while limiting exploration would tend to form stable ideas, attitudes, and clinical skills. Limiting their exposure to novel and varied stimuli, they would miss opportunities to expand and challenge existing commitments. Thus, differentiation would be compromised in the sense that trainees who consistently limited exploration would develop a therapeutic repertoire that is relatively narrow, stable, and somewhat inflexible. Alternatively, trainees who emphasized exploration and limited committing, while being exposed to a variety of stimuli and experiences, would not make these ideas, skills, and ways of working their own. That is, differentiation would be compromised in the sense that there would be limited internalization and consolidation of input into a personal therapeutic repertoire. In both cases, trainees’ ability to cope resiliently with a range of clinical presentations would be compromised.

59 The narratives, providing a window to a particular time and circumstances, suggest that often, even with trainees who engage in both processes, there is an inclination towards one process or another (i.e., a focus in the narratives on the acquisition of skills, clinical experience, and knowledge, or on engagement in the internal world, making meaning of experiences in the world), resulting in a somewhat different style of identity construction.

60 I term this approach to identity formation structure-reliant, discussed in detail along with a case illustration in a later section.

61 I term this approach to identity formation the wanderer, described in a later section.
The data further indicate that trainees who emphasized the identity task of feeling and limited reflection, while being emotionally engaged in their experience, would not use their experience as much to learn about themselves as psychotherapists. That is, psychological separation would be hindered since trainees would be limiting their familiarity with their own style, preferences, and areas of challenge and would be less aware of what they have to offer as psychotherapists and the ways in which they are limited.\(^6\) Alternatively, if reflecting was emphasized and emotional engagement was limited, trainees’ self-understanding would not be as embedded in an emotional experience. Psychological separation would be compromised in the sense that trainees would be somewhat disconnected from themselves and others (i.e., there would be in a way too much distance from one’s experience to observe) and thus could not develop a sense of themselves as psychotherapists that would deeply resonate with them.\(^6\)

I understand these variations in the ability to hold the dialectical tension between identity tasks to be the result of the self-context interaction. *Identities, created through that interaction, manifest in these variations.* That is, individuals with unique histories and personal characteristics encounter professional/relational/cultural contexts with specific qualities and challenges. Fluidity is a function of the continuous renegotiation between self and context. Decreased fluidity suggests that trainees’ capacities are overwhelmed by contextual demands; that is, there is a mismatch between trainees’ resources and the requirements of the context in which they operate. Focusing on one task or developmental process and limiting another is a way of managing the overload created by these challenges, resulting in compromised ability to satisfactorily meet the demands and needs of the professional environment and/or of oneself.

\(^6\) I term this approach to identity formation *the reactive*, discussed in detail along with a case illustration in a later section.

\(^6\) I term this approach to identity formation *the analyzer*, described in a later section.
In the following section I will focus on the self-context interaction and the different identities that are created in the tension between them.

**Self-Context Dialectic: Identity Configurations**

As described thus far, trainees learn and develop in a professional and cultural context that poses multiple demands of varying nature, requires tolerating considerable ambiguity, and is constantly changing. Within this context, trainees perform four identity tasks, with varying degrees of ability to move fluidly among them. My analysis of the data suggests that the ways in which trainees perform the identity tasks—the specific tasks they emphasize and the extent to which they fluidly shift among them at a certain time and in certain circumstances—reflect different responses to the context and the challenges it poses. I term these different responses identity configurations.

**The Concept of Identity Configurations**

An identity configuration represents a certain approach to identity formation that trainees assume at different times and contexts. It involves a certain position on the continuum of maintaining the tension between each pair of dialectical identity tasks (i.e., exploring and committing, and feeling and reflecting) and between the processes of differentiation and psychological separation (See Figure 6).

Trainees can occupy different positions on this continuum. For example, in a certain supervisory relationship at a certain time, a trainee may emphasize the acquisition of skills (i.e., differentiation process), focusing on learning a particular treatment model (i.e., committing), and limiting exposure to other models (i.e., limiting exploration). Alternatively, at a different time or with a different supervisor, the same trainee may engage more in understanding his or her
particular style compared to the supervisor’s style (i.e., separation), moving fluidly between engaging with the supervisor (or being emotionally immersed in the telling of an interaction with a client), and reflecting on these interactions. The position on the continuum that trainees occupy is always the result of the interaction between the individual and the context. I think of the interviews I conducted with participants as embodying such relational contexts, allowing me access to certain versions of identity—a view into what is possible.

In my analysis of the data I have identified six identity configurations, each representing an end-point position with respect to how the dialectic is managed and which identity tasks are emphasized (See Figure 7). These identity configurations are extensions and elaborations of the original clusters identified in early stages of the analysis.

I present four non-dialectical and two dialectical identity configurations. The non-dialectical configurations—structure-reliant and wanderer at the level of differentiation, and reactive and analyzer at the level of separation—represent reduced fluidity among dialectical identity tasks (i.e., limited engagement in a certain task). The dialectical configurations, the open to experience (differentiation) and the meaning-maker (separation), represent the ability to shift fluidly among dialectical identity tasks according to the changing self-context interaction. The dialectical
configurations in essence incorporate within them the non-dialectical configurations as temporary approaches to identity formation that can be occupied under certain circumstances.

That is, the dialectical configurations represent the ability to fluidly shift among various identity configurations.\textsuperscript{64}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{figure7.png}
\caption{Six end-point identity configurations.}
\end{figure}

The ability to negotiate engagement in identity tasks flexibly manifests in fluidly shifting among various identity configurations. For example, at the level of differentiation, the open to experience represent flexibility in terms of maintaining the tension between exploring and committing. Accordingly, when necessary, trainees can limit exploration and emphasize committing, thereby occupying for a point in time the structure-reliant configuration. The difference between the dialectical and non-dialectical configurations is the ability to respond flexibly to contextual demands versus occupying a certain identity configuration more consistently across contexts.
Identity Configurations: Prevalence in the Data

As noted, six identity configurations were identified. Structure-reliant, wanderer, and open to experience represent an emphasis on the differentiation process, focusing on the experience in the external world. Reactive, analyzer, and meaning-maker reflect an emphasis on the process of psychological separation, with a focus on the internal experience. Two of the six identity configurations, the wanderer and the analyzer, are theoretical possibilities that were not fully identified in the data and were created based on more subtle expressions and theoretical extrapolation from other identity configurations. Of the 29 interviews, 16 (55.2%) were classified at both the differentiation and separation levels, with one classification usually considered more primary. This means that at the time of the interview, participants actively engaged with both processes, typically emphasizing one level more than the other (e.g., an interview reflecting both the open to experience and meaning-maker configurations, with the former being more prominent). The other 13 interviews received a single classification, reflecting a primary focus of the narrative on one level, directing attention to the experience in the external world (i.e., differentiation) or inward (i.e., psychological separation).

In terms of the prevalence of the four identity configurations that were clearly identified, structure-reliant was the least common identity configuration in the sample. Five interviews (17.2%) were classified as structure-reliant; in three (10.3%) of them it was the primary classification and in two (6.9%) it was a secondary classification. In addition, two interviews in which structure-reliant was a primary classification reflected a middle level structure-reliant (i.e., were closer to the middle of the continuum between structure-reliant and open to experience, reflecting greater fluidity between committing and exploring). As this identity configuration represents a way of coping with challenges by trying to simplify one’s experience in
psychotherapy and training, its limited occurrence in a sample of psychotherapist trainees (who have to have a certain capacity to tolerate ambiguity and complexity) makes sense and is encouraging. Despite the limited occurrence of this identity configuration, the three narratives that received a primary classification of structure-reliant clearly shared a common approach to identity formation and were markedly distinct from other narratives, suggesting that this is a valid way in which to organize these data, albeit uncommon.

Open to experience was the most prevalent identity configuration in the sample, identified in 18 (62.1%) interviews. It appeared in combination with another identity configuration in 13 (44.8%) interviews. It was the primary classification of 11 (37.9%) interviews, with one of them characterized as low open to experience (i.e., closer to the middle of the continuum between structure-reliant and open to experience, but still in the range of open to experience).

Reactive was the second most prevalent identity configuration, identified in 16 (55.2%) interviews, 12 (41.2%) of which received dual classification. It was the primary classification of 11 (37.9%) interviews. Six (20.7%) interviews were considered middle reactive. That is, there was greater capacity to negotiate between the identity tasks of feeling and reflecting. Finally, meaning-maker was identified in seven (24.1%) interviews, all of which received dual classifications. It was the primary classification of four (13.8%) interviews.

In terms of stage of training, while the structure-reliant configuration was somewhat more common among beginner (2, 22.2%) than advanced trainees (3, 15.0%) and open to experience was somewhat more prevalent among advanced trainees (13, 65.0 versus 5, 55.6%), these differences are relatively small and possibly insignificant. This suggests that tendencies
with respect to exploration and committing may be more associated with pre-existing differences among participants rather than stage in training. As would be expected, training stage does seem to play a bigger role with regard to the process of psychological separation. The classification of reactive was more frequently given to narratives of participants in the coursework stage (6, 66.7%) than in the post-coursework stage (9, 45.0%). Nevertheless, the non-negligible presence of this configuration among participants at the post-coursework stage suggests that while trainees are likely to develop greater separation as training progresses, there are still meaningful differences among them that go beyond training experience. The meaning-maker configuration was given to narratives of advanced trainees only, suggesting that experience is required for achieving this state (6, 30.0%). Given the small sample size, and especially the relatively small number of beginner trainees (9, 31.0%), these observations are impressionistic in nature and have to be tested empirically. Since the majority of participants were women (79.3%) and of European-American origin (79.3%), no meaningful statements can be made regarding gender and ethnicity/race. Table 1 summarizes these data along with reference to stage in training.
Table 1

*Frequency of Classifications of Identity Configurations Overall and by Training Stage*

*(N = 29)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identity Configurations</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Coursework <em>(1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt;-3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; years; n = 9)</em></th>
<th>Post-coursework <em>(4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; year +; n = 20)</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Classification</strong></td>
<td>N = 29</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single classification</td>
<td>13, 44.8</td>
<td>4, 44.4</td>
<td>9, 45.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual classification</td>
<td>16, 55.2</td>
<td>5, 55.6</td>
<td>11, 55.0</td>
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<td><strong>Structure-reliant</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>0, 0.0</td>
<td>0, 0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual classification</td>
<td>5, 17.2</td>
<td>2, 22.2</td>
<td>3, 15.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary classification</td>
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<td>1, 11.1</td>
<td>2, 10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary classification</td>
<td>2, 6.9</td>
<td>1, 11.1</td>
<td>1, 5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Open to experience</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Single classification</td>
<td>7, 24.1</td>
<td>2, 22.2</td>
<td>5, 25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3, 33.3</td>
<td>8, 40.0</td>
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<td>4, 13.8</td>
<td>1, 11.1</td>
<td>3, 15.0</td>
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<td>2, 22.2</td>
<td>5, 25.0</td>
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<td><strong>Reactive</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>2, 22.2</td>
<td>4, 20.0</td>
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<td>4, 44.4</td>
<td>5, 25.0</td>
</tr>
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<td>Primary classification</td>
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<td>2, 22.2</td>
<td>3, 15.0</td>
</tr>
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<td>2, 22.2</td>
<td>2, 10.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 (continued)

Frequency of Classifications of Identity Configurations Overall and by Training Stage

\( (N = 29) \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Identity Configurations as Primary and Secondary Classifications</th>
<th>( n, % )</th>
<th>( n, %^a )</th>
<th>( n, %^b )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meaning-maker</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Single classification</td>
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<td>0, 0.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dual classification</td>
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<td>Primary classification</td>
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<td>4, 20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary classification</td>
<td>2, 6.9</td>
<td>0, 0.0</td>
<td>2, 10.0</td>
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Various Combinations of Identity Configurations Identified in the Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Coursework (1\textsuperscript{st}-3\textsuperscript{rd} years)</th>
<th>Post-coursework (4\textsuperscript{th} year +)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>( n, % )</td>
<td>( n, %^a )</td>
<td>( n, %^b )</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single Classification</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open to experience</td>
<td>6, 20.7</td>
<td>2, 22.2</td>
<td>4, 20.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low\textsuperscript{c} Open to experience</td>
<td>1, 3.4</td>
<td>0, 0.0</td>
<td>1, 5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle\textsuperscript{c} Reactive</td>
<td>2, 6.9</td>
<td>0, 0.0</td>
<td>2, 10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual Classification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle\textsuperscript{a} Structure-reliant-Meaning-maker</td>
<td>1, 3.4</td>
<td>0, 0.0</td>
<td>1, 5.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle\textsuperscript{c} Structure-reliant-Reactive</td>
<td>1, 3.4</td>
<td>1, 11.1</td>
<td>0, 0.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Structure-reliant-Reactive</td>
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<td>0, 0.0</td>
<td>1, 5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open to experience-Meaning-maker</td>
<td>2, 6.9%</td>
<td>0, 0.0</td>
<td>2, 10.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 (continued)

Frequency of Classifications of Identity Configurations Overall and by Training Stage
(N = 29)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of Identity Configurations as Primary and Secondary Classifications</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Coursework (1st-3rd years)</th>
<th>Post-coursework (4th year +)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$n$, %</td>
<td>$n$, %$^a$</td>
<td>$n$, %$^b$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dual Classification</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Open to experience-Middle$^c$ Reactive</td>
<td>1, 3.4</td>
<td>0, 0.0</td>
<td>1, 5.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Open to experience-Reactive</td>
<td>1, 3.4</td>
<td>1, 11.1</td>
<td>0, 0.0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2, 22.2</td>
<td>1, 5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1, 11.1</td>
<td>1, 5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning-maker-Open to experience</td>
<td>4, 13.8</td>
<td>0, 0.0</td>
<td>4, 20.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. In dual classifications, the first identity configuration is the primary one and the second one is the secondary one.

$^a$ Percentages are calculated with respect to the number of participants in the coursework stage ($n = 9$). $^b$ Percentages are calculated with respect to the number of participants in the post coursework stage ($n = 20$). $^c$ Low and Middle refer to the position on the continuum in terms of maintaining the tension between dialectical identity tasks. For instance, low open to experience means that there is relatively limited back and forth between exploring and committing, but the narrative is still more characteristic of the open to experience configuration than the structure-reliant.

Identity Configurations

As I describe each of the identity configurations, I will discuss how it manifests as a more temporary position that trainees may occupy in response to different contexts, as well as how it
may look like if occupied more consistently.65 I will follow four of the descriptions of identity configurations with a depiction of a case in my sample that reflects the specific identity configuration.66 Several of the cases I describe represent a combination of two identity configurations (i.e., one primary and one secondary), one at the level of differentiation and one at the level of separation; however, I will focus on the primary identity configuration. I will later describe two cases that represent a combination of two identity configurations. One of the two will be a more extended case study, as it is an example of a disrupted developmental process.

General note. In writing the case illustrations I combine the past and present tenses. I use the past tense when I more clearly refer to the interview situation—what was said by the participant and me—or to the experiences the participant reported. When I refer to my analysis of the narrative (e.g., recurrent themes, ideas it represents) I use the present tense. While the narrative is embedded in a particular temporal and relational context, it also has a certain “eternal” existence that goes beyond the one time encounter. Thus, it feels right to me to describe my understanding of the narrative in the present tense. In addition, for an easier reading, I removed from the quotes phrases and utterances that do not add meaning to the text, such as “you know,” “like”, “hmm” or “uh.”

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65 As noted earlier I view the interview situation as allowing for the emergence of various identity configurations that are created in that particular context. I cannot draw definitive conclusions regarding the extent to which participants occupy these identity configurations more consistently. That being said, narratives of advanced trainees that depict a more extensive developmental process are suggestive of a more common approach to identity formation. This has allowed me to conceptualize each identity configuration in terms of a temporary state that trainees occupy in different contexts and to speculate about the form and developmental path that such identity configuration may take when occupied more consistently.

66 Two of the six identity configurations, the wanderer and the analyzer, are offered as theoretical possibilities, but were not clearly identified in this sample and thus are not followed by case illustrations. I will elaborate on this point later as I describe these two identity configurations.
In the process of differentiating and setting themselves apart from other psychotherapists, trainees make commitments to certain ideas, attitudes, techniques, professional activities and settings, and so on. In the face of considerable ambiguity and multiple and changing demands, the act of making commitments—deciding on a therapeutic intervention, learning a particular treatment model, or choosing an internship site—involves, at least temporarily, the achievement of clarity, singularity, and stability.

When trainees emphasize the task of committing and limit exploration, they occupy an identity configuration I term structure-reliant. Narratives that were classified as structure-reliant suggest an approach to identity formation that represents a way of dealing with the considerable ambiguity and complexity in psychotherapy work and the multiple training demands by attempting to minimize them (through limited exploration).

This configuration is characterized by inclination towards ideas, activities, ways of working, and clinical settings that are clear, structured, predictable, and aligned with one’s way
of thinking. There is a tendency to think at the macro level of psychological phenomena and to understand people in terms of delineated and clear schemata. In terms of psychotherapy work, there is emphasis on effectiveness, providing clients with something tangible, and seeing the outcome of one’s work. Accordingly, structured activities, such as routinized intake sessions and problem-solving strategies, are often employed. The narratives suggest that this configuration may be occupied during periods or moments in psychotherapy work in which there is a great need for clarity and an effort to increase control over the therapy process.

With regard to the training environment, this identity configuration is characterized by a preference for training experiences that are sequential, structured, and based on clear expectations. There is an expectation that the training environment conform to rules of accountability, predictability, and rationality. There is a desire for clinical supervisors to provide clear and direct answers and offer concrete behavioral guidelines. Similarly, in terms of learning style, there is preference for a hands-on, concrete approach to learning. In this identity configuration, assimilation is a more common form of learning (i.e., modifying input to accommodate existing internal structures) than accommodation (i.e., changing internal schemas to accommodate new information).

All trainees are likely at one point or another to cope with the professional and developmental challenges they face by attempting to limit exploration and simplify their experience by establishing clarity and stability; many narratives that were not classified as structure-reliant contained examples of such coping strategies. It is not only natural but essential at times. For example, when trainees attempt to develop a specialization in a certain treatment modality, it may be helpful to immerse themselves in this experience and learn a single perspective well before exploring and playing with other ways of working and attempting to
apply the treatment model more flexibly. Similarly, when coping with a chaotic clinical situation, it may be helpful for a period of time to simplify clinical data and establish some structure.

However, the analysis of narratives suggests that when this identity configuration is occupied more consistently—and exploration and experimentation with a variety of ideas, experiences, and ways of working are limited—the aspects of clarity, singularity, and stability that characterize the act of making commitments become primary. In this case, exploration is typically limited to familiar territories and is experienced as a way to gain knowledge needed and to hone therapeutic skills within a chosen domain. Trainees are likely to seek training experiences and expand their knowledge and skills within a specific, delineated area of interest or specialization (e.g., a primary theoretical orientation, a specific treatment modality, particular clinical populations). As a result of this focused exploration and thereby limited exposure to potentially new or contradictory stimuli, commitments, once made, tend to be stable and consistent. The data suggest that for trainees who were to more consistently occupy this configuration, theoretical orientation would tend to consist of perspectives that can more readily be experienced as clear, structured, well-defined, and distinct from other models, thus enabling clean and clear interpretations of new events. There appears to be a tendency to specialize in

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67 As noted, three interviews (out of five) received a primary classification of structure-reliant (two received a secondary classification) of which two were very advanced trainees. This portrayal of the form this configuration would take if occupied more consistently is based on these two narratives, which depict a lengthy developmental process and appear to reflect a consistent approach to identity formation. These two narratives are presented as case illustrations (i.e., John and Jane).

68 In the narratives, out of the five participants who were classified as structure-reliant, three defined themselves as primarily practicing Cognitive-Behavioral and evidence-based models, whereas two identified as psychoanalytic. One of the two who espoused a psychoanalytic approach used research as a framework that provides structure, believing that “the truth” regarding what works and doesn’t work in psychotherapy can be arrived at through scientific means. The other was struggling with the ambiguous nature of the psychodynamic model to which she was exposed in school. All five desired a clear sense of effectiveness and sought to structure psychotherapy work. The narratives suggest that it is the need for clarity that is the core issue, rather than adherence to a particular theoretical orientation. In my view, certain treatment models such as Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy, Interpersonal Therapy, Dialectical-Behavioral Therapy, and manualized treatments open themselves more readily to the use of structure.
one primary theoretical orientation or combine treatment modalities that share a certain rational (e.g., evidence-based treatments). While other influences may be integrated into the primary theoretical orientation, such influences tend to be understood through the lenses of the main theoretical model (i.e., maintaining consistency rather than holding multiple conceptions).

In terms of clinical work, the data suggest a desire to define the psychotherapist role in unambiguous terms and an inclination towards assuming the position of the “expert.” This perception of the psychotherapist role, if it becomes the preferred mode of working, goes hand-in-hand with the tendency to specialize within specific domains. In narratives classified as structure-reliant, while there is an awareness of individual differences and human complexity, distinct structures, models, and diagnostic categories are considered most useful in understanding clients.

The tendency to explore within certain specialized domains that characterizes narratives classified as structure-reliant limits opportunities to encounter stimuli and information that are inconsistent with, and thereby disruptive of, current identifications. This in turn promotes stability. Accordingly, the developmental path of trainees who occupied this configuration more consistently is expected to be relatively linear and may take the form of specialization—gaining

than psychodynamic and humanistic-existentialistic perspectives and thus are likely to draw trainees who seek structure. This is a hypothesis that should be studied empirically. However, I also believe that most, if not all, treatment models are open to different interpretations and uses by clinicians and that structure and clarity can be established in most treatment modalities. For instance, in a classical psychoanalytic approach, psychotherapists often assume an expert, knowing position, and maintain a consistent and predictable framework. Similarly, basing one’s clinical work on research findings (i.e., evidence-based practice) is also a way to establish understanding, clarity, and a sense of effectiveness. In summary, the emphasis here is on trainees’ inclination towards structure, clarity, and predictability, as well as their gravitation towards theoretical orientations and treatment models that they perceive as offering these qualities. In addition, the choice of theoretical orientation often depends on the theoretical orientation of the program. This would be especially true for structure-reliant individuals who limit exploration and thus possibilities to expand options for identification. In these cases this configuration manifests in the considerable challenge that trainees may experience when the treatment modality to which they are exposed is not very amenable to the establishment of structure.
increased expertise in a specific domain. Such trainees may thrive in familiar and consistent environments.

While this is of course a legitimate professional path, I view it as less desirable for two reasons. First, because of the limited exploration, the resultant therapeutic style would tend to be relatively consistent, predictable, and familiar, and therefore less distinct and specific to trainees’ unique qualities and abilities. The narratives suggest that it is through continuous exposure to various ideas and experiences and experimentation with different ways of thinking and working that individuals come to learn and “discover” what works for them. Second, the consistency of experiences, while allowing for depth of experience, is likely to limit flexibility in working with the diversity of clients, presenting problems, and changing circumstances that research suggests psychotherapy work presents these days (Brown, 2011; Felix & Akhtar, 2004; Gabbard & Westen, 2003; Hansen, 2002). That is, both trainees and the professional setting would be compromised because of the decreased fluidity between exploring and committing. If such an identity configuration is occupied more consistently, it is important, in my view, that trainees be aware of their style, strengths, and limitations so that they find the right professional environments that match their specific skills and in which they can prosper and make important contributions. In other words, increased psychological separation (i.e., awareness of style) would compensate for decreased differentiation (due to limited exploration).

Case illustration of structure-reliant: John. John is a 32-year-old European-American man. At the time of the interview he was finishing his fifth year of training, completing his pre-doctoral internship in a well-known hospital, and about to defend his dissertation. I read John’s

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69 My underlying assumption is that it is more desirable for trainees to develop a way of working that is congruent with and allows expression of their abilities interests, and sensibilities.
narrative as reflecting primarily\textsuperscript{70} the identity configuration of structure-reliant because of prevalent themes of stable commitments, limited exploration, and attempts to simplify his experience in training and psychotherapy by establishing structure and seeking clarity, predictability, and consistency.

As a reminder, the first and focal question of the interview asked participants to tell their story of their development as psychotherapists, touching on what brought them to the profession, aspects that contributed to their development, and their vision of their professional future. The way in which participants began their stories is a fascinating topic, deserving its own focus. It set a certain tone, a framework, for the story and defined the boundaries of trainees’ professional journey as told. John began his story by stating jokingly that the question sounded like an internship interview question, suggesting some possible discomfort or a sense of being evaluated where another might potentially see opportunity for exploration and discovery.\textsuperscript{71} He then went on to tell how he got to the psychotherapy profession, describing it as the “classic shrink’s story.” This inclination towards similarity and typicality versus difference and uniqueness was a repeated theme in John’s narrative and consistent with the structure-reliant configuration in which differentiation is compromised:

\begin{quote}
I wound up being the person my friends would talk to about stuff when it was bothering them, so sort of probably the classic shrink’s story [laughs]. I do remember the first time being aware that everyone didn’t do that when I had a good friend who… specifically sought me out to get my opinion on something… he told me that and that really in a way sort of freaked me out and flattered me at the same time… now I’m supposed to give you
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{70} As stated earlier, narratives often represent two identity configurations, one at the level of differentiation and one at the level of psychological separation, typically with one identity more dominant. John’s narrative reflects primarily the identity configuration of structure-reliant with a secondary identity configuration of reactive.

\textsuperscript{71} This experience of the interview as an internship interview was repeated in another narrative I will discuss later, also representing structure-reliant and reactive identity configurations. In contrast to these two interviews, many participants whose narratives represent an open to experience identity configuration experienced the interview as an opportunity to process their experience in training.
some sort of information that other people can’t? You know, like [laughs] before then it was just like, oh, this is my opinion. Then it became something more than that.

While John was flattered, he was also “freaked out” by the idea that he had something unique to offer.

Like many participants, John initially majored in a different field and later changed his major to psychology. While he explored different options during his undergraduate studies before settling on a major, exploration was time-bounded with the clear goal of finding a career he could enjoy and to which he could commit. Once such a choice was made, commitment was “for life:”

I sort of knew that if I did it [switch major to psychology], I was going to do it all the way. So it was probably going to be a very long time commitment.

…when I was switching, in my mind I was switching for life really.

…at the time I didn’t realize it until my mid-20s when everybody was trying to figure out what they wanted to do with their lives, and people would be like, Oh, you’re so lucky, you know what you want to do. But at the time it didn’t seem like a big deal… For some reason, I just didn’t see anything else out there. I guess I was avoiding doing that... And I guess the final nail on the coffin was to do a job in the field and like it.

Following his undergraduate studies and some practical clinical experience, John applied to graduate school. He described his graduate program as psychodynamic in orientation. However, he reported that he had become “disenfranchised” with the psychodynamic model and had come to identify with a cognitive-behavioral (CBT) model, to which he was exposed while working at a CBT clinic. Speaking about the experience of studying in a psychodynamic environment while identifying with a different model, John again expressed a desire for similarity and shared view:
It was a bit isolating in a sense... you definitely like outside... it made it a little bit difficult, like when I would talk about a case. I mean, everyone was very helpful and people were talented clinicians but it wasn’t the same as having your peers having the same outlook as you, so that made it feel a little bit... like you... weren’t necessarily all exactly... on the same team.

Sharing a similar outlook is privileged over making a unique contribution or being exposed to varied perspectives.

When John explained what drew him to the CBT model he described the qualities of clarity, effectiveness, and concreteness:

I wound up at...the CBT clinic... I got a job there and then when I asked a question of like what to do, I actually got a straight answer... there’s still plenty of times in CBT where I felt like I didn’t know what to do. But at least there’s someone willing to pretend like there might be something helpful that you could do in the moment...I felt like there was something concrete that you could grab onto.... So that became defining really because that’s how I really learned what CBT is... and realized that that was more the mode I wanted to work in...

One can sense in this quote the need to deal with considerable ambiguity in psychotherapy work, to manage many moments of not knowing what to do. In the face of this ambiguity John sought clear guidance, “something concrete you could grab onto.”

Throughout the interview, when John discussed his theoretical orientation and way of working, he limited the discussion to two theoretical models, contrasting his CBT perspective with the psychodynamic model. While CBT seemed to represent for him clarity, the psychodynamic model appeared to represent ambiguity:

[In a psychodynamic model] there’s a lot of mysteriousness about how you actually might be helping clients... whereas I felt like in this kind of therapy [CBT]... Maybe you’re not a hundred percent accurate, but at least when someone asks, Well, when am I going to get out of treatment, I feel like I can give them a straight answer.
John’s primary identification with the CBT model and rejection of the psychodynamic model reflect his tendency to minimize the ambiguity inherent in clinical work, as represented by the psychodynamic model, by working with a treatment model that offers some clarity.

Towards the end of his training, during his internship, which was predominantly cognitive-behavioral in orientation, John was exposed to a more structured psychodynamic model and began to integrate this model into his work. When he discussed this experience, again themes of time-bounded exploration and stable commitments were apparent:

I did go to an internship program that was very strong in CBT. I wanted a program that did CBT, didn’t just give it lip service and incorporate it with a bunch of other stuff. But I was really also very open to learn- doing more psychodynamic therapy partially ‘cause I figured I probably- I would never do it again in my life. My last opportunity.

John described that what helped him integrate the two perspectives were the overlaps he identified between the two models, especially structure, allowing him to translate the psychodynamic model into the concepts and language of his primary approach. This is suggestive of a limited form of integration that is based on assimilating new stimuli into preexisting identifications, but with little accommodation of one’s ideas to new input. It is based on similarity and consistency rather than on the ability to hold multiple, at times contradictory, ideas:

He [the instructor] gave me… much more structure… I was like, okay, this is a model, I can understand how it works. I’m pretty proficient at CBT at this point and I can see the overlap… and so I think that really helped me sort of synthesize and understand how I could be integrative, yet at the same time have this specific approach that I sort of espoused.
I think I’ll still continue to benefit from both the psychodynamic and the CBT training. I’ll frame it as CBT. You can very easily take object relations [i.e., psychodynamic tradition] and frame it as, core beliefs [i.e., CBT model], and then explain it to the client in those terms. But there’s certainly overlap. They’re not incompatible in my mind.

By trying to understand the psychodynamic model through the lenses of his existing model, John could maintain the stability, consistency, and singularity of his primary identification:

So yeah, I think my identity will always be cognitive-behavioral, but also again focusing more on just being practical and integrating when you need to. And if I need to do something in terms of object relations [i.e., psychodynamic tradition], then you need to reframe it in terms of core beliefs or whatever schemas [i.e., CBT tradition].

When I asked John to tell me how he understood his work in psychotherapy, a more ambiguous question than the question of theoretical orientation, he identified the main qualities that are important to him in his clinical work:

I think structure’s important. If there’s not some sort of framework for how to maintain the structure, I will too much just follow whatever the client is saying and try to stay with them where they are and maybe not necessarily helping them with the problem they came in for solving. At times, you know, people will… scatter so much that you never actually make progress on anything. You know, it’s like a moving target all the time.

John attempted to control the therapy process, with its complexities and ambiguities. Following the client was experienced as distracting from the treatment process and interfering with progress. He focused on structure, problem-solving, and making progress and did not see a therapeutic potential in the unpredictability and non-linearity of the client’s output.

The phrase that I loved was: Therapy begins where common sense leaves off [laughs] and that was true. It’s like when people say things that are crazy, you say, Hey, that was crazy. [laughs] What are you talking about?... I was beginning to realize more than CBT or psychodynamic that probably that practicality and learning to get better about identifying when it looks crazy, putting out that doesn’t make sense and figuring out how to present that to clients in a way that is helpful to them. It was more of what I was
interested in necessarily than just that it’s CBT versus psychodynamic, which is that it tends to be more inherently a part of CBT, I think.\textsuperscript{72} For John there was a clear and identifiable line between “crazy” and “not crazy,” and he understood his role as learning to identify this line and communicating it to clients in a way that would be useful to them. He seemed to have a consistent approach applied to all clients. What is “crazy” was absolute rather than relative to the client.\textsuperscript{73} From this notion of therapy follows the view of the psychotherapist as the expert who knows and thus directs the therapy process. The challenge is how to communicate, to “sell,” clients a known truth:

I try to set the agenda most of the time…

…(over time) the relational aspect builds up too, so people hopefully begin to trust me in treatment, and that allows them to sort of buy what I’m selling, you know, like to believe…to think what I’m saying is believable.

John’s narrative suggests that he dealt with the multiple demands and unpredictability of his training environment in a similar way to his management of the ambiguity and complexity of psychotherapy work: by seeking clarity, predictability, and structure. When I asked him about his current challenges on his way to becoming a professional he talked about the dissertation process:

The biggest challenge for me now is my dissertation…… A lot of revisions to drafts, things like, Hey, you should put in more stuff here. And in the next draft, I put it in. He’s like, This is just useless, take it out … it’s like arbitrary… It reminds me of dealing with the Rorschach training when the professor would say like, Oh, this is the interpretation,

\textsuperscript{72} In this quote John also expresses the idea that what draws people to certain theoretical orientations is the underlying qualities they see in them. As I stated in discussing the structure-reliant identity configuration, structured models like CBT are not inherently associated with the structure-reliant configuration. However, structured models do open themselves more to be used as a way of managing ambiguity and complexity for trainees who seek that.

\textsuperscript{73} At the time of the interview John was working primarily with individuals who were diagnosed with anxiety problems and personality disorders. I mention that because these are areas in which what is “crazy” is, in my view, debatable, as opposed to working with psychosis where one could potentially argue for a clearer distinction.
and then she’d look at the book and be like, No, I mean it’s this… Part of it is on my part, that unstructured activity like that is the worst thing for me to get done… like if you write a paper for a class and it’s a B plus paper or an A minus paper, you’re done. Your draft, if it’s not what they think is an A… you gotta write it again. So… the end point is less clear.

My problem with academia is that there’s no real-life consequences… I think there needs to be a combination of security and accountability, but the hoops you have to jump through to finish dealing with people who are not particularly that interested or invested or held accountable in any way for their actions is maddening for my personality… if there was a way to do a five-year internship, I would have much preferred to do that.

John here raised an issue that is valid and real and appeared in many narratives. Completing one’s dissertation entails many challenging phases, and students are often impacted by the personalities of professors. However, it is noteworthy what participants decided to talk about when discussing current challenges, what they chose to include in their story. For John, the difficulty lay in dealing with arbitrariness, ambiguity (i.e., “unclear end point”), and lack of accountability. Indeed, he stated that he would have preferred to do a five-year internship, an experience that is more familiar and consistent.

Similarly, when I asked John about valuable aspects of his training, he referred to his best supervisor on whom he could count to provide the “right answer:”

She was great, so if I asked her a question… she asked me what I thought and trying to find my thoughts on it. She’d always be able to give me the CBT answer and she’d always be able to give me like a sort of, But this is also easy to do. So she always, always had an answer for everything, but would acknowledge that the answer maybe wouldn’t always work, but she always knew the right answer, you know, the CBT answer… She was a great supervisor.

In sum, John’s narrative suggests a way of forming an identity that is built around establishing structure, holding primary and stable commitments, and seeking consistency and
clarity. Accordingly, if John occupied this configuration consistently, it is likely that he would continue working with CBT, developing an expertise and integrating other influences in a way that maintains his primary identification. That is, his therapeutic repertoire would be relatively consistent and stable and in that sense less differentiated (i.e., it would be similar to the way of working of other CBT practitioners and would not reflect a unique professional journey).

Awareness of his particular style—its contributions and limitations—would allow John to choose clinical settings, certain populations, or presenting problems for which such a consistent approach is useful and makes sense; however, in my view, given the considerable human diversity and constantly emerging new clinical presentations, his work would benefit from the ability to integrate other influences and shift more flexibly between different modalities and ways of being with clients.

*Emphasis on Exploring: The Wanderer Identity Configuration*

![Diagram](image)

*Figure 9. The wanderer identity configuration.*

While making commitments involves achieving clarity, singularity, and stability, *exploration* by its nature entails tolerating ambiguity and unpredictability as trainees venture into
new experiential territories, exposure to and appreciation of multiple perspectives, and malleability of boundaries. When the task of exploring is emphasized and the task of committing is limited, trainees occupy the identity configuration of the wanderer, which represents a way of coping with the challenges posed by psychotherapy work and training by embracing their ambiguous, complex, and constantly changing nature.

In terms of clinical work, the wanderer configuration reflects a high tolerance for the ambiguous and unpredictable nature of the work and decreased need to achieve clarity. There is awareness of the multi-faceted nature of psychotherapy work and ability to explore clinical cases from various vantage points, without developing a more integrated understanding. Similarly, multiple potential therapeutic interventions can be identified, considered, and experimented with at different times. Occupying this configuration allows one to be attuned to the particularities of the moment and to be less focused on the more continuous therapeutic process. In terms of theoretical orientation, this configuration represents the ability to explore and entertain a range of ideas and treatment modalities, without making long-standing commitments to specific perspectives or treatment models. With regard to the training environment, there is ability to tolerate unpredictability and manage unclear or changing expectations.

All trainees at certain times and in certain contexts may occupy this identity configuration. It is necessary in psychotherapy work, with its complexities and uncertainties, to be able to suspend consolidation, tolerate not knowing, and open oneself to new discoveries. Certain clients sometimes require that we spend considerable time tolerating uncertainty and avoid attempts at organization. However, if this identity configuration became a more prevalent mode, and the act of making commitments was consistently limited, it could interfere with self-definition and the development of a therapeutic repertoire. It would also compromise trainees’
ability to cope effectively with aspects of training and clinical work that do require consistency, continuity, and clarity.

Specifically, while occupying this configuration more consistently might allow trainees to be comfortable with the murky and intricate facets of clinical work, it would likely interfere with maintaining a therapeutic frame, establishing clear and coherent case formulations, simplifying and organizing complex clinical data, deciding on a single course of therapeutic action, and holding the continuity of the therapeutic process. Such trainees might be exposed to various ideas and experiment with different professional roles; however, they would not sustain these commitments long enough to gain experience or deep understanding. That is, their repertoire would tend to consist of multiple, varying ideas and techniques, but might lack the depth and richness that come from building and accumulating knowledge over time and taking in things more fully. In other words, their differentiation would be hindered by the difficulty to develop a unique set of skills, identifications, and ways of working that expands, evolves, and gains complexity over time, reflecting trainees’ personal style.

It should be noted that given the typical characteristics of PhD psychotherapy students—individuals who managed to get accepted to a PhD program and made a commitment to a long training period involving considerable time and personal and financial resources—this configuration is not expected to appear as a consistent approach to identity formation in this population. Indeed, it did not fully emerge in the narratives as a clearly distinct configuration. Rather, this portrayal is based on theorizing, on extrapolating from narratives in which exploration was primary (along making commitments), and on more discrete and isolated
manifestations. Nevertheless, it is offered here as a more temporary position that trainees may assume and as an extreme version of more moderate configurations seen in trainees who struggle with consolidation, making choices, and self-defining. Accordingly, this discussion will not be followed by case material.

Committing-Exploring Dialectic: Open to Experience Identity Configuration

![Diagram of Committing-Exploring Dialectic]

Figure 10. The open to experience identity configuration.

Narratives in which a fluid movement between exploring and committing is apparent—in which participants continuously seek and experiment with various ideas, experiences, and professional roles and flex their boundaries around the self to consider new commitments (or reconsider old ones)—reflect an identity configuration that I term open to experience. It emphasizes participation in the external world (i.e., a focus on differentiation), actively exploring one’s training environment and being open to its impact. The ability to hold the tension between the identity tasks of committing and exploring reflects coping with the multitude of challenges.

*What did emerge in the narratives are milder forms of emphasis on exploration versus commitments, in which participants emphasized the fluidity of their experience and were constantly examining their choices, commitments, and identification. For example, one participant stated that if after she finished training in clinical psychology, she was still interested in medicine (another area of interest), she would definitely consider medical training. Another participant struggled, despite being an advanced student who was exposed to various influences, with committing to a particular theoretical orientation or any future plans, desiring to leave his options open.*
that psychotherapy work and the profession pose flexibly, that is, with a range of responses: from seeking clarity to tolerating ambiguity, from simplifying experiences to appreciating of multiple points of view, from establishing continuity and stability to celebrating change. Stated in terms of the identity configurations, open to experience subsumes the configurations of the structure-reliant and the wanderer as trainees flexibly negotiate engagement in exploring and committing in response to changing circumstances.⁷⁵

The open to experience configuration is manifested in the willingness to try different training experiences and activities and venture into new experiential territories. When occupying this configuration, the data suggest, trainees enjoy exposure to new ideas and perspectives through classes, books, and mentors, and can easily adopt new stimuli into their repertoire. They experiment with a variety of professional roles, treatment models, and clinical populations and settings and let these experiences impact them, committing to certain aspects and rejecting others. They can feel comfortable with the lack of clear and consistent (professional) role definition and enjoy occupying and shifting among various professional positions and functions. In psychotherapy work they can maintain the tension between various modes of experience. They can be comfortable with and even enjoy the ambiguous and unpredictable nature of clinical work, finding it to be a source for creativity and stimulation. At the same time, they can maintain clear and consistent therapeutic frameworks and the continuity of the treatment process. In many of the narratives that reflect this configuration, there is a somewhat experimental quality to clinical work in the sense that trainees are willing to try new experiences and new ways of working with their clients in sessions. Similarly, possibly due to the focus outward on experience

⁷⁵ As noted, the dialectical configurations represent fluid movement among identity tasks and among identity configurations.
and participation in the world\textsuperscript{76} (i.e., on the process of differentiation; exploring and committing), in these narratives there is often a pragmatic approach to psychotherapy work, emphasizing clinical utility.

In terms of the training environment, the data suggest that when occupying this identity configuration, trainees tend to view their training environment as affording opportunities for learning and expansion. They can be flexible and adaptive in dealing with supervisors, mentors, clinical settings, and clients and present more malleable boundaries. They can be active in their use of learning opportunities and can easily adapt their environment’s input to fit their needs (i.e., assimilation), as well as change their identifications, knowledge, and skills to adapt to new information (i.e., accommodation; e.g., accommodating their way of working to incorporate a new treatment model or technique).

Narratives of advanced trainees who appeared to occupy this configuration more consistently\textsuperscript{77} suggest that over time, maintaining the tension between exploring and committing allows for movement in commitments and identifications resulting in the development of a complex, flexible, and constantly evolving therapeutic repertoire, reflective of trainees’ unique journey. Specifically, trainees for whom this appeared to be the prevalent mode tended to experience all training experiences, positive or negative, as valuable to their development as

\textsuperscript{76} The data suggest that in the identity configurations of structure-reliant and wanderer the focus is also outward, often emphasizing clinical utility. However, when the structure-reliant configuration is occupied more consistently because of limited exploration, this pragmatic approach manifests in the nature of the primary treatment modality that is adopted, gravitating towards treatment models that are perceived to be effective and to have more discernible outcomes. In open to experience there is adoption of multiple perspectives that have proven useful with different clients. In the wanderer configuration, when occupied consistently, while there is experimentation with different modalities, there is avoidance of making commitments to ways of working that have shown effectiveness.

\textsuperscript{77} Of the 11 interviews (out of 18) that received a primary classification of open to experience (seven interviews received a secondary classification of open to experience), eight were of advanced trainees. As noted earlier, such narratives depicted a developmental process of a larger scope and thus provided some insight into the participants’ approach to identity over time.
psychotherapists, helping them to refine their skills and interests. Because of their broad exploration, they have become sensitive to the existence of multiple points of view and were able to easily shift perspectives and appreciate various ways of being and operating in the world. They seemed to use theories flexibly, picking and choosing aspects that fit their clients’ needs. While these trainees recognized and appreciated the universality in human experience, their exposure to a variety of training experiences and ways of thinking sensitized them to and made them focus on the micro level of psychological phenomena. They often viewed their clients as unique individuals best understood in their particular context. Accordingly, they often emphasized the psychotherapist’s flexibility as the most important quality and attempted to adapt their style and interventions to clients’ changing needs.

As a result of their continuous exploration, receptivity to experience, and malleable boundaries, trainees who appeared to more consistently occupy this configuration seemed to constantly change and develop as psychotherapists (i.e., become more differentiated). In the narratives they often expressed their appreciation for and excitement about the multiple options and future possibilities that this profession allows them and spoke about their future aspirations with flexibility and openness to change. Accordingly, their developmental path is expected to be non-linear, involving the development and continuous expansion of a unique therapeutic repertoire, which in turn allows them to deal resiliently with professional demands as the dance between committing and exploring continues.

This state of affairs represents an ideal in terms of the process of differentiation. The ability to optimally negotiate engagement in exploring and committing is expected to vary. Training programs, in my view, should aim at helping trainees to maintain the tension between committing and exploring more consistently. I will return to this point later in the discussion.
Case illustration of open to experience: Sarah. Sarah is a 34-year-old European woman. She completed her undergraduate and Master’s studies in her country of origin and worked there as a clinician for a while. She moved to the US with her husband and began her doctorate studies in Clinical Psychology. At the time of the interview she was finishing her fifth year of training and was at the end of her clinical internship.

I view Sarah’s narrative as representing the open to experience identity configuration because of its emphasis on continuous exploration and receptivity to a variety of training experiences, resulting in what appears to be a complex and constantly evolving therapeutic repertoire that is reflective of her unique professional journey (i.e., increased differentiation).

In response to the main question of the interview, asking her to tell the story of her professional development, Sarah said, “That’s a very good question. Well, the story is evolving. It’s forever evolving.” Compared to John who expressed some discomfort with the question and focused on the typical nature of his story (i.e., “classic shrink story”), Sarah emphasized the continuously changing nature of her story, telling it in a way that tracked the evolution of her particular interests, her unique professional path.

What was apparent in her story was the way in which her professional interests developed and evolved as her experience in the world changed, informing her professional choices. For example, she described how she came to develop interests in working with children, mental health, and educational and organizational issues. She chose a Master’s Program, which allowed her to give expression to all these interests:

I applied to educational and clinical psychology…which meant two areas of training basically. The clinical training focused on children and families, and more of an organizational system-oriented training… and it was a combination of clinical and
organizational, which kind of fitted my initial thoughts and it was a very intense and rich experience.

After becoming a mother, Sarah felt that working with children was too close emotionally and, responding to this change in her life, shifted to working with teens and young adults. Nevertheless, she found her prior experience with young children valuable in her work with older individuals and enjoyed the unique contribution that her developmental perspective afforded her. This was a continuous thread in her narrative, where prior commitments were not replaced by new ones, but rather expanded and changed as new experiences left their mark, resulting over time in a complex therapeutic repertoire that was unique to her. This is consistent with the open to experience configuration in which the tension between exploring and committing is maintained, leading to continuous expansion and differentiation of one’s therapeutic style:

I discovered that working with young adults has a lot to do with their past as children. And my deep understanding of development and how certain circumstances look for a child when they actually are children gave… me an edge in a sense. I felt like I was very much equipped to really gain an understanding of what some of these people were going through. Most of my clients there were women… all of them had either sexual abuse in their past or some form of trauma… So I became very interested in that.

Her exposure to women with a history of sexual abuse expanded her interests to the area of trauma. Prior interests were maintained and expanded with new experiences.

Likewise, Sarah’s research tied together her different interests in children, trauma, education, and mentorship. Alongside a deepening of her interests (i.e., committing) there was also the ability to hold to and integrate multiple commitments and interests (i.e., multiple commitments as a result of the exploring-committing dialectic):
And my research... is about resiliency, but it's about maltreated children and their construct of resilience and what factors do you need to put in the environment of the child to support resilience. So it kind of all came together for me in a sense and I kind of found myself very deepening my knowledge in that area.

When Sarah described the decision to move to the US, the willingness to venture into new experiential territories that is characteristic of the open to experience configuration was apparent:

My husband at the time got an opportunity to travel abroad for work, so I started to think, you know, this would be a good opportunity for us to experience a different culture and travel a little bit, kind of expand, and... my visa would not allow me to work, so I started thinking, okay, what would I like to do? I can’t work. Go back to school. [laughs] Which I did.

In a situation in which one could understandably experience trepidation and anxiety—leaving one’s familiar environment and moving to a foreign country to follow another person’s professional endeavor—Sarah identified an opportunity for self-expansion. Moreover, faced with an obstacle—having no working visa—she opened up another door and decided to go back to school. There is a sense of excitement about going towards the unknown with its potential impact on the self.

Indeed, reflecting on her experience in the US, Sarah recognized the value of being exposed to a different culture not only for herself, but also for her professional community. This appreciation of having a unique perspective to offer as a psychotherapist (i.e., increased differentiation) to the psychotherapy field is a repeated theme in Sarah’s narrative:

I think I learned a lot of things that are unique to this culture, and that I can see how that can enrich- let’s say I go back to my own country. I can make a contribution because I was trained here... I saw sort of like different kinds of models of thinking, ways of doing things, and I learned things here, and I think that has a contribution. So it would contribute to the community of psychologists.
Not surprisingly, when I asked Sarah about her theoretical orientation, she described it as “integrative”:

I think that I really like the model that I was trained in, which was very integrative and I think that I was trained in object relations, developmental psychology, self-psychology, the sort of like general psychodynamic perspective. But also for my work in school, I had to incorporate some CBT so I’m very integrative in my style… I was kind of like thrown into work and, you know, whatever came out for me….my supervisors went with it… it’s also a combination of what felt intuitive to me, to my personal style. If I had to choose sort of like one theory in particular that is really sort of like close to my heart, that would be object relations, and not with a specific theorist in mind… but it’s not exclusively… I’m not a purist in that sense.

Sarah’s theoretical orientation reflects the different perspectives to which she was exposed, which resonated with her and fit her personal style. That is, it was the result of negotiation between her training environment and the learning opportunities it afforded and Sarah’s particular sensibilities and preferences. Both Sarah and John were exposed in their training to psychodynamic theory and CBT, with different approaches leading to different theoretical identifications. In integrating the two models, John relied on similarity and consistency by translating psychodynamic ideas into the language and structure of his primary CBT model. Sarah’s represents a more flexible approach in that she used different theories depending on “whatever came out” for her. While she had her preferences, she was not a “purist.”

Sarah’s integrative theoretical orientation goes hand-in-hand with her view of her role as psychotherapist, emphasizing flexibility:

Basically my role is… to support the goals that promote well-being and adjustment in my client, so like their goals or their ambition to reach that, and my role would be to support that. And the way to support that would be in whichever way would fit with the person who’s in front of me. And it’s sort of like their agenda for themselves and how can I be there for them to support their agenda. I think it’s the connection that I make for the person and that they make for me. What they choose to see in me. And my flexibility to supply that.
In contrast to John, who demonstrated a more consistent way of working and tends to “set the agenda,” for Sarah it was the client who set the agenda and she attempted to flexibly support that. This is a way of working that involves adaptation to clients’ changing needs, thereby requiring greater tolerance of inconsistency and ambiguity.

Similarly, when Sarah described what she liked about psychotherapy work, she mentioned the ability to occupy different roles that this work allows her. There is enjoyment of variety, change, and expansion:

> I think I like the variety, the way I can be in so many ways, in a sense. I like the fact that I can see people make changes for themselves or go through a process where they can, at the end, feel differently from what they felt before, gain a wider perspective or new tools. Learn about their world, learn about themselves, learn about their options, and to be able to be the person who would walk that journey with them is a nice feeling. There’s a definitely mentorship or some quality of a trainer or I don’t want to say a parent, but it taps into a parental role… or sometimes I’m the student [laughs] and my client is my teacher. So that kind of flexibility, I think you really appreciate.

There are multiple notions of what clients can get out of therapy and accordingly different therapeutic roles that she can assume.

When I asked Sarah about current challenges she faced with regard to her professional development, she reframed it as questions with which she engaged. She focused on the uncertainty of her professional future, heightened by her status as an international student. Many participants touched on the experience of coping with ambiguity when describing their current challenges. John too discussed the ambiguity and arbitrariness of the dissertation process, desiring more consistency and predictability (e.g., doing a five-year long internship). While Sarah too was challenged by the uncertainty of her future, she did not attempt to minimize it as much as engage with it:
Well, I don’t know if they’re challenges or concerns. These are sort of like either turning-points or decision-making points. Do I want to… continue to live here in the US and practice here? or do I want to go back and practice back home?... do I want to get licensed here?... back home?... when do I stop being a student and start being a professional, in a sense?… in a general sense of it, I will always be a student, right? There’s always somewhere else to go and I think I would very much like to develop my psychoanalytical skills, so that would require me further training which I would probably do. But in terms of career… this is a big unknown, so like where am I going?... I think that I can say that I’m a pretty optimistic person so no matter what decision would be made, I will find the way to make it work.

Not only was she open towards the unknown future, she also wanted to maintain the continuously evolving nature of her development, holding the position of a student.

While many important questions regarding her professional future were still open, what Sarah did know was the kind of professional environment she would like to be part of—a multidisciplinary group of practitioners:

As for the future, I’m pretty certain that I do see myself working in an environment that is not isolated… like creating a group, multidisciplinary group of people preferably, social worker, psychiatrist, psychologist… I think it captures different aspects… of resiliency… So it’s more of the biopsychosocial mode that would capture different areas of functioning, and I think that that is something that is more of a rich perspective in a person… I do a lot of collaborative work with other professionals, and I see the positive aspects of that.

This sense of openness towards the future alongside a commitment to a certain notion, which was developed as a result of her experience in the world, are reflective of the open to experience configuration. It is also noteworthy of course that the notion with which she identified was an interdisciplinary one, emphasizing the benefits of multiple perspectives.

The appreciation of multiple experiences and perspectives was most clearly expressed when Sarah described what she found most helpful in her training:

I think the most helpful in terms of my development was the different experiences that I got. Different settings, different supervisors, different ways of thinking. The more I was exposed to different differences the more I could develop my taste, sort of like in terms of
what I like, what I don’t like. It’s important for me to learn what I don’t like as well and
gain sort of like more refined understanding of what it is that I’m looking for... I think
that... even negative experiences... I really appreciated them ‘cause it was a learning
experience for me. I think overall I’m very pleased.

I think that in my particular case... because I was sort of like trained in two different
places and two different cultures, I don’t feel like I missed things. I feel like I
constantly... expanded my knowledge.

In these two quotes Sarah expressed what I see as the hallmark of the open to experience
configuration: by experimenting with a variety of experiences, trainees over time expand and
refine their interests and skills. There is openness to all kinds of training experiences as they are
all learning opportunities. This process of increased differentiation always takes place between
the self and the context. Sarah articulated the importance of the presence of the other in allowing
for this process of development to unfold when she described the supervisory relationship:

I had a very, very good supervisory experience which I think, for me at least, was key... I
think when the supervisory relationship works well, regardless of theoretical orientation,
I felt I could safely learn, I can be open, I can explore. There’s another person out there
that helps me do that, and allows me to expand my skills and expand my knowledge and
evolve. So I think that was very important.

Whereas John appreciated his supervisor’s ability to provide the “right answer,” for Sarah it was
about exploring and expanding. There is no right answer external to the self, but rather different
answers that are negotiated between self and other.

In sum, Sarah’s narrative represents some of the primary qualities of the open to
experience identity configuration: continuous exploration and receptivity to the impact of others,
which results in constant expansion and evolution of commitments; willingness to venture into
new environments and the unknown alongside the ability to engage with identifications
consistently; appreciation of multiple perspectives; and tolerance of the ambiguous, complex,
and constantly changing nature of clinical work.
Emphasis on Feeling: The Reactive Identity Configuration

The identity configuration of the reactive represents an emphasis on the identity task of feeling and limited reflection. As described previously, feeling refers to trainees’ emotional engagement as they learn, work, develop, and interact with their training and social environment. In narratives that were classified as reactive, emotional experience was primary in guiding trainees’ choices, identifications, and commitments and in shaping their participation in training. Trainees were drawn to and opened themselves more to the impact of training experiences that produced positive emotional experiences (e.g., excitement, interest, joy, competence), especially intense emotions (e.g., deep engagement, passion, exuberance). In contrast, they tended to withdraw from experiences or reject commitments and identifications when they experienced negative emotions (e.g., anger, frustration, anxiety) or disengagement (e.g., boredom, indifference). In these narratives, trainees often expressed passion for or were enthusiastic about their psychotherapy work and training experiences and could be deeply impacted by others. The data suggest that for emotional experience to guide commitments, choices, and actions it has to be clear, simple, and stable. It is difficult to act or make decisions when one’s feelings are unclear, confusing, mixed, or constantly changing.

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$^{78}$

Figure 11. The reactive identity configuration.
limited reflection and consequently the decreased observatory distance from others manifested in these narratives in an inclination towards experiences of sameness and difficulty with experiences of difference and discrepancy. When training experiences produced more confusing or mixed emotions, or when there was a sense of mismatch with supervisors, teachers, or aspects of the profession, there was difficulty remaining emotionally engaged and receptive to learning,\textsuperscript{79} which in turn limited the influence that various training experiences could have. There was an inclination towards closeness, similarity, and a sense of fit with supervisors, clients, and clinical settings, and learning seemed optimal under these conditions. Similarly, there was preference for theories that made sense intuitively and resonated emotionally. As in the desire for perfect fit with the environment, there was a wish for the psychotherapist role to feel natural and self-congruent.

The data and common sense suggest that all trainees from time to time would occupy this configuration in which feeling is emphasized and reflection is limited. It is necessary for learning and for psychotherapy work that trainees be able to immerse themselves in experience and let go at times of reflective capacities.\textsuperscript{80} It is also unavoidable. However, because of the limited reflection, which allows observatory distance and processing of experience, in this configuration, trainees can become overwhelmed by training and learning experiences that produce intense negative feelings, ambivalence, or confusion. For instance, in the narratives participants described periods of considerable doubts regarding their competence and in more extreme cases

\textsuperscript{79} The decreased distance between oneself and others appeared to make trainees feel as if “they were their environment” and thus challenged their ability to tolerate uncomfortable feelings or unaccepted aspects in their training and professional environment.

\textsuperscript{80} In contemporary psychoanalytic thinking, much has been written about the inevitability and essentiality of enactments in the therapeutic process in which psychotherapists are drawn to powerful dynamics with clients and only gradually over time regain distance and begin to make sense of these experiences (Bromberg, 2008; Stern, 2010).
of questioning their professional choice in response to challenging experiences in psychotherapy (e.g., persistent difficulty connecting with a client) or in training (e.g., a conflict with a supervisor).

The narratives suggest that when this identity configuration is occupied more consistently,\(^81\) the decreased reflection—manifesting in decreased distance from others, difficulty tolerating difference, and limited processing of experience—over time compromises professional development by impeding self-confidence and the development of a unique sense of self with which one is familiar and comfortable (i.e., impeding psychological separation). Specifically, with limited processing, the data suggest, trainees avoid being overwhelmed by their feelings by organizing their experience in training to include experiences of emotional resonance that produce positive and unambiguous feelings. Over time, the inclination towards experiences of sameness results in missed opportunities to learn about oneself from experiences of difference, limiting engagement in the process of figuring out which aspects work for oneself and which do not. That is, there is less of a back and forth between self and other, between feeling (immersion with others) and reflecting (distance from others), which over time can interfere with the process of gradually defining oneself vis-à-vis another. In addition, in narratives classified as reactive, trainees appeared to be more receptive to input that resonated with them emotionally (i.e., assimilation), than to input that was incongruent (i.e., accommodation), thereby maintaining relative internal stability. For example, trainees became disenchanted with a supervisor whose style was incongruent with their own and closed themselves to learning from this supervisor, thus limiting opportunities to expand and define their own therapeutic style.

\(^{81}\) Of the 11 narratives that received a primary classification of reactive, seven were of advanced trainees, allowing theorization of this identity configuration as a more consistent approach to identity formation.
In addition, the data suggests that the decreased self-reflection not only restricts the range of trainees’ training experiences, but also limits their capacity to learn about themselves from the experiences in which they do engage. While trainees do open themselves to the impact of experiences that produce positive emotions and a sense of fit, such impact is not embedded in considerable processing and is therefore not fully owned and integrated into an evolving sense of self. That is, trainees “accumulate” influences but without integrating them into an organizing framework that is their unique subjectivity. Accordingly, often in these narratives the theoretical orientation of trainees who appeared to occupy this configuration more consistently mirrored the cumulative impact of their clinical experiences and direct internalization of supervisors, more than the accommodation of these influences to their particular style. Trainees’ view of clients was immediately linked to their clinical experiences and lessons they have learned from their experiences. The more emotionally charged experiences tended to leave the greatest impact in terms of how they understood clients, their role and clinical work.

In terms of the psychotherapist role, the inclination towards experiences of similarity and immersion makes the more observatory position of therapeutic work (i.e., participant-observer) complicated to negotiate for trainees who more consistently occupy this configuration. In narratives classified as reactive, trainees struggled considerably with how to be in therapy—to be themselves and follow their natural inclinations, or try what they have learned, which was often new and not entirely consistent with their style. Consequently, these trainees were often very dependent on supervisors, psychotherapists, and mentors to help them process their experience and better understand their therapeutic style and way of working. The feedback, encouragement, 

82 In the narratives, this often manifested in difficulty describing the appeal of certain theoretical models or treatment approaches and relating choices and identifications to a broader understanding of oneself.
and support of supervisors were considerably instrumental in developing greater self-confidence as psychotherapists.  

The reactive identity configuration has been the most difficult for me to understand and clearly articulate since more than the other configurations it did not appear often in its more extreme version, had various and subtle manifestations, and is inherently a transitional configuration. Accordingly, it was constructed based on a wide range of interviews from typical to more moderate expressions. The prevalence of more moderate versions in the narratives is due I believe to the nature of the population under investigation. Specifically, psychotherapy students, although they differ in this respect, are overall reflective individuals. Thus, when I discuss the dialectic between feeling and reflecting I am dealing with a relatively narrow range compared to the general population. Nevertheless, because of the centrality of reflection in this profession the variation that does exist among trainees is meaningful.

The transitional quality of this configuration has to do I believe with the nature of training. As described above, trainees who occupy this configuration struggle with experiences of ambivalence, mismatch, and ambiguity. Psychotherapy work and training afford many such experiences. Training also provides various formal and informal opportunities, predominantly through supervision, to process and discuss such complex experiences. Thus, over time, as trainees process challenging or ambivalence-inducing experiences in supervision or other

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83 This challenge is not limited to beginner trainees; the narratives demonstrated a range with regard to how comfortable beginner trainees feel with their own style as psychotherapists and the extent to which they depend on a supervisor to figure out how to be in the therapy room. Similarly, among advanced trainees too, while there was greater self-confidence overall, there was a range in terms of self-confidence, familiarity with one’s distinct style, and ability to tolerate difference from other therapists and supervisors. I will elaborate further on this point when I will discuss the identity configuration of the meaning-maker.

84 The extent to which this configuration emerged in its more extreme form was not a function of developmental phase. Several of the more typical cases were advanced trainees.
forums, they begin to develop greater reflective capacities, more distance from their emotional experience, deeper self-understanding, and increased tolerance for a variety of emotional experiences. That is, they gradually develop and can be more comfortable with a sense of themselves as unique psychotherapists, gaining more self-confidence and autonomy. Alongside the ability to immerse in experience, gradually there is greater capacity to be separated yet connected to others. In the narratives, participants often described this process, reflecting on the change they have gone through since beginning training. This developmental process of increased separation is expected to happen to all trainees as they advance in training, gain more clinical experience, and engage in reflection. Moreover, learning to manage the tension between feeling and reflecting is a career-long process; some would say it is an inherent part of the work. However, there was a range in the sample that was meaningful in terms of how consistently different trainees appeared to occupy this configuration. While trainees are more likely to occupy this configuration more often at early stages of their development, it is also a matter of individual differences that goes beyond clinical experience and stage in training\textsuperscript{85}; in the sample, while this configuration was more prevalent among beginner trainees (6, 67%), it was still quite common among advanced trainees (9, 45%).\textsuperscript{86}

*Case illustration of the reactive identity configuration: Tamar.* Tamar is a 27-year-old European-American woman. At the time of the interview she was at the end of her second year

\textsuperscript{85}This touches on the issue of selection of students and the question of whether there are individuals who are more talented as psychotherapists. Nevertheless, admission considerations aside, there is a need to recognize and deal with the existent range of reflective capacities of trainees.

\textsuperscript{86}These numbers reflect both primary and secondary classifications. Looking at primary classifications alone, four interviews (44.4%) among beginner trainees and seven (35%) among advanced trainees were classified as reactive.
in her doctoral program. She had had a year-long experience in psychotherapy and was involved in research.

I read Tamar’s narrative as representing the reactive identity configuration primarily because of her engagement in the process of psychological separation and her struggle to negotiate the tension between emotional engagement and reflecting, with an emphasis on the former. This narrative also reflects the transitional nature of the reactive identity configuration, as Tamar gradually developed her reflective capacities and became more separated as a psychotherapist.

Tamar began her narrative stating, “Okay, so I feel like- I definitely feel like I’m still developing,” underscoring the ongoing nature of her development. Reading this statement in the context of the entire narrative and Tamar’s particular phrasing suggests a different meaning than Sarah’s (open to experience case illustration) similar statement suggested (i.e., “the story is forever evolving”). For Tamar, it is not the story (i.e., identity) that is forever changing, it is she who was still developing. That is, the focus here is not so much on the constantly changing nature of one’s professional journey, as on current personal development. There is a sense of having to get someplace and of not quite being there. In contrast to Sarah’s narrative in which the focus was on her external experience (i.e., differentiation), Tamar’s story tended to focus on her sense of herself as a psychotherapist. This focus on separation was further accentuated when Tamar followed the above comment with a question, wondering if she should begin her story with how she got to her doctoral program. Tamar turned to me for guidance, rather than determining the scope and boundaries of her story herself. This theme of dependence on others

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87 I will later present a case of an advanced trainee that represents a combination of the reactive and structure-reliant configurations.
for self-definition was repeated in Tamar’s narrative and is consistent with the reactive configuration.

Tamar continued her story by stating that she initially chose to go into medicine, a somewhat common profession in her family, and in that sense could be seen as a choice that is based on similarity. Accordingly, the decision to transition to psychology could be thought of as a move towards greater separation, from her family, but also more broadly by choosing a path that involves reflection, and thus recognition of separateness:

While I was in college, I really thought that I wanted to go into medicine. And you know, I have family members that are doctors and I just really thought that that’s what I wanted to do. But while I was an undergrad and I was taking all of the pre-med courses, I just found I was [laughs] so unhappy and I really wasn’t enjoying them….I had to work really hard… it wasn’t worth the struggle ‘cause I wasn’t happy doing it… it would be one thing if I enjoyed it.

The lack of enjoyment was primary in her decision to give up on medicine. Similarly, as she explored other professional options as an undergraduate, enjoyment led her to a growing engagement in psychology:

I spent my junior year just taking a bunch of different courses and I took everything… And one of the courses I took was psychology, and it was just an intro class and I just really liked it. And I just remember I enjoyed it and I enjoyed writing the papers and doing the research and it was great. And so that’s how I sort of decided to get into that field.

After her undergraduate studies, Tamar enrolled in a Master’s program in developmental psychology and was involved in a research project. She described the decision to continue to doctorate studies in clinical psychology:

I liked the work on the research. But I really liked- I wanted to actually do more than just research it. I felt I was just a data collector and I kind of would always take like five or 10
minutes at the end and sort of make conversation with the subject after everything, and just sort of talk to them and get their ideas about things. And I just felt like that was much more enjoyable for me than the actual collection of the data and analyzing it. So that’s when I really decided I wanted to be in clinical.

Positive feelings are often primary in decision-making and were likely present for most participants in choosing this profession. Nevertheless, different participants described the decision to enter the psychotherapy profession in different ways. In Tamar’s story, most prominent in impacting her decisions was her emotional experience.

Reflecting on what contributed to her development as a psychotherapist (in response to the main interview question), Tamar spoke about the difficulty of figuring out what kind of psychotherapist she wanted to be. That is, her response to the question of what has influenced her focused on the more subjective, internal level of developing a sense of self as a psychotherapist (i.e., the level of separation), rather than on the adoption of skills, treatment models, attitudes, and so on (i.e., the level of differentiation). Indeed, for Tamar the theme of a growing separation was primary in her narrative:

I guess contributing to my development. So far, I think that it’s been hard to kind of figure out what kind of therapist I want to be … I had great experiences with my supervisors where I think they sort of noticed that I was kind of struggling to figure out what I should be doing in the room or… like how I should be. And so many times, they would just tell me, just be yourself. Just sit there and, you know, be in the moment and just do what comes naturally.

I forgot that I knew that… I’m able to connect with people…When I’m trying to, you know, being a certain way… it doesn’t come across as very genuine. But if I can just sit back and be myself and listen to the person, I feel like, you know, that’s definitely something I’ve learned to kind of work with… and I genuinely like doing it. I like being there with a person and talking to them.

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88 For example, as I will demonstrate in another case illustration, participants who maintained a more reflective position often described this decision from a more psychological perspective, talking about the underlying reasons for choosing this profession (e.g., the desire to heal others which went back to early experiences). Such participants likely enjoyed their psychology studies, but they chose to discuss other aspects of their decision.
As soon as I could kind of let go and stop like trying to be you know, a really stuffy kind of therapist or like... some sort of image I had in my mind of what it would be like, I felt like I was a lot more effective... it was more real and genuine when I was actually just being myself.

The challenge of figuring out how to be in psychotherapy is likely to be present to some extent for all beginner psychotherapists. Nevertheless, as noted before, the analysis of narratives suggests that there is a meaningful variation in this regard. There were participants for whom the position of the psychotherapist, even at their beginning stages, felt more familiar and comfortable. Although they were trying to figure out their particular way of working, they seemed to do that at a somewhat different, more separated, level. For Tamar the role did not feel familiar or comfortable and there was greater need to negotiate between being “herself” and being a psychotherapist. She forgot aspects of herself (i.e., that she knows how to connect to people) when she entered the psychotherapist role. Underlying this struggle in my view was the difficulty negotiating the tension between feeling and reflecting, which is inherent to the therapeutic position (i.e., participant-observer). The reactive identity configuration reflects a need to learn how to be a psychotherapist as opposed to further developing an already familiar position, as in the meaning-maker,\(^\text{89}\) described later in the discussion. This is not a qualitative

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\(^\text{89}\) To illustrate this point I would like to compare these last three of Tamar’s quotes with the following passage taken from Greg’s narrative, representing the meaning-maker configuration. At the time of the interview Greg, a 28-year-old European-American man, was at the end of his fourth year. He described an experience during group supervision that took place prior to conducting psychotherapy with clients (he had some clinical experience prior to graduate school as many trainees do but not in psychotherapy per se). The professor asked students to videotape themselves as they were doing mock therapy and she commented on the videos:

> One of the things she said to me after we watched my film was that… I looked the most comfortable out of everybody in the class. That everybody… they were doing fine but they just seemed very nervous and like out of place, and there was something very at home for me in the therapy room. And so… she was wondering whether I had done this before and I said, you know, not really to any big extent, but it was just an identity that I’m very comfortable with.

Greg attributed this sense of comfortableness despite his limited experience to innate predisposition and to growing up with a psychotherapist mother who exposed him to this way of thinking about the world.
difference, but rather reflective of a continuum of the extent to which there is fluid movement
between feeling and reflecting.

The interplay between feeling and reflecting was most apparent when Tamar discussed
the aspects that she saw as important in psychotherapy work and in her role as a psychotherapist:

I think just really having positive regard for clients… when they come in just
automatically making them feel like you really respect them… as a human being and
what they’re bringing to you is very important, and you care about them…

Providing I guess a relationship such that they know that there’s somebody there that
cares about them and is interested in what goes on and helping them… fix or change
things that they want to change… Sort of like helping kind of clarify and focus things for
them.

[Describing what qualities are most important for therapists to have] I think that warmth
and compassion, I think, are definitely two things that I think I found make me the most
comfortable (as a client), so I kind of assume would be like what would make someone
else comfortable. And I think also being able to listen to what someone’s saying and you
kind of put pieces together. You know, when things are presented in a lot of pieces, it’s
being able to kind of put it all together.

While the emotional aspects of the work (e.g., providing care, respect, warmth, compassion)
appeared to be primary for Tamar, there was also attention to aspects of psychotherapy involving
reflection (e.g., “clarify and focus things,” “put pieces together”).

The challenging process of developing greater fluidity between feeling and reflecting
leading to increased separation manifested in Tamar’s narrative in different ways as she spoke
about various aspects of her professional development, including theoretical orientation,
psychotherapy work, coursework, and interactions with her advisors. For example, Tamar
touched on the difficulty of defining her theoretical orientation as a beginner psychotherapist, an
important step in developing a subjective sense of oneself as a psychotherapist:
I always used to panic whenever I feel like [laughs] what’s my theoretical orientation….I remember a professor asking us at the beginning, it was like the very beginning of practicum, like before we had even started to see clients [laughs]. And… I kind of panicked and I was like, I don’t know! I don’t know! [laughs] I haven’t even started- I don’t know what like feels right yet because I haven’t done anything yet….I used to think before, the cop-out answer was like I’m eclectic and I incorporate everything. But I feel like it- I guess I really kind of have become client-centered and sort of thought about what would work best with each client.

I have found the question of theoretical orientation to be a challenging one to participants at all developmental stages and more so for beginner psychotherapists. Nevertheless, what is notable here, in my view, is not the difficulty of defining her theoretical orientation in the absence of clinical experience, but the considerable anxiety around the demand for self-definition. This passage also reflects the transitional quality of the reactive configuration, as Tamar described some movement from a more anxious position to beginning to develop her own theoretical perspective. A once “cop-out answer” (being eclectic) has become a position which she could more meaningfully advocate.

Tamar described another aspect of a growing separation when she discussed the challenge of developing greater self-reflexivity and negotiating the boundaries between herself and her clients in psychotherapy:

I’ve kind of struggled with… dealing with things like countertransference…you’re trying to figure out… what’s me and what’s the client… and something kind of upsets me or I feel like that made me feel uncomfortable and it’s trying to figure out, okay, why did that make me uncomfortable. Sometimes I have a little trouble with that.

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90 There was a range in the narratives in terms of how comfortable beginner therapists were with not having a developed theoretical perspective, a quite reasonable response at this stage of development. Moreover, there were participants who could speak about their theoretical orientation prior to conducting psychotherapy based on their familiarity with theory and reflection on their experience in the world.
The task of figuring out one’s experience vis-à-vis the client is an inherent part of psychotherapy work, particularly for certain theoretical approaches. Tamar discussed this aspect of the work, which can be experienced as challenging yet stimulating, as something with which she struggled.

Discussing current challenges with respect to her professional development, Tamar expressed yet another facet of the process of separation concerning the task of setting boundaries around the self:

Time management is really hard (laughs) to kind of figure out, like how much time do I really put into something and where do I draw the line… like when do I stop working on it? When do I just put it aside and hand it in and that’s the way it is and it’s not going to be perfect?

Again, as with the previous two quotes, Tamar touches on a real challenge in psychotherapy training—the need to respond to multiple demands and manage one’s time. This challenge was experienced differently by different participants. Tamar seemed to focus more on the need to set boundaries for herself and separate from the tasks in which she engaged. The decision to stop working on a task seemed to be an act of self-definition for her, hence the desire for perfection.

One of the most notable manifestations of the decreased separation that characterizes the reactive identity configuration is the difficulty tolerating difference and the resultant reactivity to others. This was apparent when Tamar described an experience of a serious conflict with a former advisor:

…I had this whole big advisor upset kind of thing…my first advisor that I started with was really demanding and [had] unrealistic expectations of me and it was sort of this weird betrayal in a way because I had worked for her for two years already and I come into the program with her, and then she sort of turned around and was like, I really don’t want to work with you anymore… I think she realized at the time that I was really more interested in clinical work, and then that was sort of like, well, I’m just a researcher and I don’t have any room for clinical people… So it was sort of this kind of [laughs] really upsetting thing and I really felt like I didn’t have a place in the program anymore and I didn’t really know what I was doing, and then that sort of made me question everything,
like did I choose the right- not only the right school but like the right field? Like maybe I should kind of go back and- I don’t know what I was doing.

Tamar described an undoubtedly very difficult and discouraging experience. Nevertheless, the fact that it had the power to undermine not just her experience in the program, but her professional choice as well is noteworthy. This is characteristic of the reactive configuration in which emotional experience is primary in organizing experience and thus experiences of difference and mismatch can be overwhelming and undermining. Reflecting on this experience from the distance of time and from a position of greater separation, Tamar supported this argument:

I think because I came to this program to continue my work with her… I kind of based a lot of my choices on that… when that kind of blew up, I was like, well, what did I do?… I was like blaming myself, you know, instead of like, I don’t know, we’re not getting along.

The other side of the difficulty with difference is the considerable appreciation of experiences of fit, which lead to increased engagement:

The advisor I have now is just… amazing and I could just have noticed like how much better my enjoyment of just like being here and being in the program has skyrocketed because I’ve learned so much with her, and I think it’s just her personality and mine mesh a lot more.

Finally, when Tamar described the contribution of her personal therapy to her development, she touches on the issue of developing greater separation as an individual directly:

I think also being in therapy myself [laughs] has been really helpful… I am noticing a lot of the ways that I kind of look at myself and how I do things… I’ve had family experiences of having mental illness in my family… And I guess I didn’t realize how much of myself I kind of developed as a reaction [laughs] and I always felt like I was reacting to things instead of sort of being more separate and less, I guess, enmeshed [laughs]… and just sort of kind of developing myself a little more as an individual and- yeah, being a little more self-accepting about the way that I am.
What is also subtly expressed here is the way in which self-reflection, typically in supervision, contributes to increased familiarity with oneself and consequently to greater separation and self-acceptance. The dependency on others for such development, characteristic of the reactive configuration, was subtly expressed in Tamar’s narrative when she discussed her experience in individual and group supervision:

I think supervision has been the most helpful because I feel like everywhere else, you lack that one-on-one time with somebody to sort of really look at what’s going on. But then even- I feel like supervision is too short sometimes ‘cause you only have… 45 minutes to talk about two clients, and I almost feel like you need 45 minutes just for one [laughs]. So that part is kind of hard.

Practicum’s been pretty good because then you get a taste of what…your classmates are doing and what’s going on with their clients, and that’s helpful… just to get like a different perspective or looking at the way that they handle something…like a lot of times, I feel like I’m kind of flying by the seat of my pants kind of thing, you know, just figuring it out as I go. And I’m always interested in what other people’s take on something would be because… this is the only time you’re going to have all these people to kind of offer opinions on what to do.

There is great need and a sense that there is not enough supervision time. Similarly, there is awareness that her ability to benefit from the input of others is time-limited, suggesting again a great need and possibly a fear of not having someone to talk to about the work.

Integrating the input she had received from supervisors, Tamar summarized where she was at in terms of her development, in a way going back to the notion with which she began of “still developing”:

I think the things that I know I need to work on are just to trust my instincts and… do what kind of comes naturally… I feel like at least I kind of have the warm kind of presence… I think I’m able to sort of pick up on people’s emotions or what’s going on so I think at least if I have that kind of skill [laughs], I can work with that, and I feel like I’m learning to do that.
This passage reflects the inherently transitional nature of the reactive configuration in which trainees, through the feedback of others, begin to make sense of their therapeutic style, their strengths and limitations. What Tamar felt she had was the warm presence and ability to pick up on others’ emotions and cues. What she needed to learn was how to use that in the work—a skill that relies on reflection. That is, she expressed in her own words the process of gradually learning to hold the tension between emotional experience and reflection on it.

In sum, I read Tamar’s narrative as representing the identity configuration of the reactive because of its primary engagement in different aspects of the development of a sense of oneself as a psychotherapist, with unique style and presence. Consistent with this configuration, the discourse style of Tamar’s narrative tended to be more concrete (e.g., depicting events) than reflective. Moreover, I found myself more active than usual during the interview, asking more open-ended questions to illicit more observations from her. This case illustration also demonstrates in my view the difficulty in articulating this transitional identity configuration, which manifests in various subtle ways. I will present another example of the reactive identity configuration (of an advanced trainee) later in the chapter, hopefully leading to a clearer and more nuanced understanding.

**Emphasis on Reflecting: The Analyzer Identity Configuration**

Reflection is the act of contemplating and processing one’s experience. It involves a certain distance from one’s environment and experience that allows observation. It also involves recognition of difference, as one mind is observing other minds. When reflecting becomes the primary approach to identity construction and feeling is limited, trainees occupy the identity configuration of the analyzer. This identity configuration is characterized by emotional
reservation, observation, analytic thinking, and analyzing and organizing one’s experience as a way of coping with the multitude of challenges that training and psychotherapy work poses.

Psychological separation

![Diagram of Psychological Separation]

Figure 12. The analyzer identity configuration.

This configuration represents pursuing training experiences and making choices based on analytic reasoning. It reflects an ability to disengage emotionally from one’s environment and observe it dispassionately. Ideas and theories are sought and appreciated as a way of understanding oneself and others. There is inclination towards more vicarious forms of learning, such as observations or discussions, rather than hands-on experiential learning.

All trainees may occupy this configuration at certain times. It allows applying one’s mental faculties without being too impacted by one’s emotional reactions and biases. It can be particularly useful when it comes to the academic and research components of training. With respect to psychotherapy work, I conceive it to be, albeit an inherent and crucial part of the work, a more defensive position in which trainees have to disengage emotionally to not be overwhelmed by their feelings and maintain reflective capacities.
If this configuration is occupied more consistently, it is likely that meanings created would not be embedded in an emotional experience and thus would not be deeply integrated into a sense of self that can be felt and owned. Similarly, while trainees who occupied this configuration often might develop observatory capacities and familiarity with a range of theories and ideas that can serve as helpful organizing frameworks, with limited emotional participation their observations and understanding of others would likely be limited and not nuanced. There might be too much distance from one’s experience and from others to “accurately see.” More importantly, psychotherapy work would be seriously disrupted if emotional engagement was consistently limited and defended against.

This identity configuration is not likely to be occupied consistently. It is expected that individuals who choose this profession tend to seek meaningful personal engagements with others and generally have the capacity to do so. In addition, the nature of training and psychotherapy work is such that trainees would not be able to sustain a position of limited emotional participation. Indeed, this configuration did not fully emerge in the narratives and has been constructed mostly through an act of theorizing. Accordingly, it is offered here more as a possibility for a temporary and necessary configuration that trainees may occupy at times.

*Feeling-Reflecting Dialectic: The Meaning-Maker Identity Configuration*

Narratives that demonstrated an ability to hold the tension between the identity tasks of feeling and reflecting represent the identity configuration of *the meaning-maker*. The back and

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91 This statement should be qualified as it is difficult to determine by means of narrative analysis whether participants spoke about their experience in a more emotionally disengaged manner, providing already processed insights and observations. Nevertheless, it was my experience in working with the narratives and especially in interviewing participants that those who demonstrated highly developed reflective capacities were also emotionally engaged—both in telling their story and in the experiences they described—thereby representing the identity configuration of the meaning-maker (in which the tension is held between feeling and reflecting). I will discuss this identity configuration in the following section.
forth between feeling and reflecting—the fluid movement between engaging in experience and creating and re-creating meanings out of experience, continuously expanding and changing previous constructions—is what constitutes the act of meaning-making. This identity configuration represents a way of responding to the complexity and ambiguity inherent in training and psychotherapy work with a range of emotional responses, involving both engaging with these challenges and using one’s emotional experiences as pathways to exploring potentially new understandings.⁹²

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**Psychological separation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Single mode</th>
<th>Dialectical mode</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reactive / Analyzer</td>
<td>Meaning - maker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Feeling / Reflecting)</td>
<td>(Feeling ↦ Reflecting)</td>
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</table>

*Figure 13. The meaning-maker identity configuration.*

In this identity configuration, in which both feeling and reflection operate, what guides trainees’ constructions of new meanings is whether these ideas and conceptualizations are personally meaningful, resonate with them emotionally, and can offer an appealing and complex way to understand themselves and others. In addition, alongside the attempt to make sense of one’s feelings and organize experience, there is also relative comfort with experiences that are

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⁹² It incorporates the temporary identity configurations of the reactive and the analyzer, in which there is emphasis on emotional engagement and reflection, respectively. That is, the flexibility of this dialectical configuration manifests in trainees’ ability to negotiate their engagement in feeling and reflecting according to changing circumstances.
ambiguous and not quite formulated. Whereas in narratives reflective of the open to experience configuration the focus was on active exploration of new territories in the external world and enjoyment of novel experiences (i.e., emphasis on differentiation), in narratives representing the meaning-maker configuration, the emphasis is on the internal journey and the excitement about the creation and “discovery” of new meanings (i.e., emphasis on separation).\(^93\)

The narratives suggest that when trainees occupy the configuration of the meaning-maker, they can play with and entertain various conceptions of psychotherapeutic work and of their role as psychotherapists. There is a sense of ease with the ambiguous, complex, and unpredictable emotions that psychotherapy work produces, experiencing it as a source for creativity and self-growth. The therapeutic role, involving a position of a participant-observer,\(^94\) feels comfortable and familiar. Provided it is consistent with their way of working, in this configuration trainees can use themselves effectively in clinical work—utilize their present emotional experience, past personal experiences, and self-knowledge to better understand and connect with clients. Whereas in the identity configuration of open to experience flexibility is expressed in the ease with which trainees can shift among multiple therapeutic roles and treatment models, in the meaning-maker configuration flexibility manifests mostly in inner receptivity to the therapeutic process and in shifting among multiple meanings and self-conceptions. That is, while in the process of differentiation the emphasis is on flexibility in terms

\(^{93}\) I make comparisons throughout this discussion between the meaning-maker and the other dialectical configuration of open to experience because there are many similarities, emanating from the ability characteristic of both to fluidly move between dialectical modes of experience. Nevertheless, there are also important differences between them that pertain to the different identity tasks that they involve, which underlie the two interrelated processes of differentiation and psychological separation. In addition, often the two identity configurations will co-exist, adding to the difficulty of making clear distinctions.

\(^{94}\) This conception of the therapist role is of course a matter of personal theoretical view. Nevertheless, most therapeutic approaches, in my view, involve some combination of emotional participation and observation. The respective emphasis may be different (e.g., participant-observer; Sullivan, 1949) and the nature of such participation and observation may vary, but I feel I can safely talk about psychotherapy as involving both.
of skills and knowledge, with respect to separation, flexibility is reflected in the plasticity of
trainees’ subjective sense of themselves as psychotherapists.

In narratives reflecting this configuration, trainees seemed to engage with supervisors,
mentors, and clients as independent yet connected agents. The focus in interactions with others in
these narratives was not so much on gaining new clinical skills and knowledge, but on better
understanding oneself as a psychotherapist and an individual. The back and forth between feeling
and reflecting seemed to allow trainees to observe their training environment, its strengths and
limitations, while remaining emotionally engaged and open to learning. In contrast to the
reactive configuration in which there was a desire for sameness and difficulty with experiences
of mismatch, in narratives representing the meaning-maker there was greater ability to tolerate
differences, work flexibly within the constraints of the training environment, and make use of the
learning opportunities it afforded. There was openness to both assimilation of new meanings into
existing ones and to accommodation of existing constructions to new input. In these narratives
excitement about the unknown nature of one’s inner journey and the endless potential of learning
about oneself and others was often expressed.

All trainees are likely to occupy at times this configuration in which they can fluidly
negotiate the tension between emotional presence and reflection; this was manifested in the
interview situation itself in which all participants, though to varying degrees, shifted between
being more emotionally engaged in telling their story and assuming a more reflective stance. The
data suggest that when trainees occupy this identity configuration more consistently,\footnote{Four interviews were classified as primarily meaning-maker and two received a secondary classification. All narratives were of advanced trainees and suggestive of a more consistent approach to identity formation. While the fact that no narratives of beginner trainees were classified as meaning-maker suggests that this identity configuration is at least partly a function of stage in training, it is my impression of these narratives and these participants that the ability to negotiate emotional engagement and reflection was also very much a matter of pre-existing individual} over time.
they come to develop familiarity and understanding of their unique therapeutic style and a sense of self as psychotherapists that is complex, continuously evolving, emotionally resonant, and deeply meaningful. Specifically, as they engage with ideas and theories that are experienced as meaningful, they gradually develop a theoretical orientation that becomes increasingly multifaceted and congruent with their personal style, reflecting the growing richness of their thinking. Such trainees appear to gravitate towards theories that are complex, multifaceted, and involve meaning-making and reflection (e.g., psychoanalytic theories). Curiosity towards their clients and self-awareness tend to be central values with regard to their clinical work.

Participants whose narratives reflected the meaning-maker configuration appeared to be “natural therapists.” That is, they demonstrated a well-developed capacity to negotiate the tension between feeling and reflecting that seemed to precede training, and their narratives suggested that even as beginner psychotherapists they embodied the psychotherapist role somewhat more easily compared to their peers. Similarly, when I compared narratives classified as meaning-maker to narratives of advanced trainees who were classified as reactive there was an apparent difference in how the psychotherapist role was occupied, suggesting that individual differences are also at play.

The relatively small number of beginner trainees in the sample (9, 31.0%) makes it difficult to determine whether this classification could be given to narratives of beginner trainees. Again, as stated previously, the association between an identity-state and specific theoretical orientations is not inherent to the theoretical approaches themselves. While certain theoretical perspectives lend themselves more to meaning-making and reflection, all psychotherapeutic approaches contain such elements. Of the seven participants in my sample whose interviews were classified as meaning-maker (either primary or secondary classification), three defined themselves as psychoanalytic in orientation and four as integrative. Out of the four integrative, for three psychoanalytic was the more dominant theoretical identification.

The data suggest that all trainees engage with the therapist role and with how to be in therapy. However, there is a discernible continuum of which reactive and meaning-maker represent opposite ends. Specifically, when focusing on advanced trainees, in narratives that were classified as reactive the role of the therapist was often experienced as incongruent with who one is and there was a struggle to develop one’s own way of conducting psychotherapy that is separate from supervisors’. In contrast, in narratives classified as meaning-maker the question of how to be in
The data suggest that when this identity configuration is occupied more consistently the developmental process of such trainees can be thought of as a non-linear and unpredictable inner expansion and change alongside a growing awareness of and confidence about one’s personal style. As with the open to experience configuration, the meaning-maker represents an ideal state; the ability to optimally negotiate emotional engagement and reflection in response to changing circumstances is expected to vary. In addition, while there are meaningful individual differences in the ability to hold the tension between reflecting and feeling, it is expected that overall when training goes well, trainees would gradually be able to occupy this configuration more often.

*The meaning-maker case illustration: Julia.* Julia is a 34-year-old woman who at the time of the interview was finishing her eighth year of training. She had completed internship and one year of post-doc training and was about to defend her dissertation. The next phase she was facing was finding a job and accumulating clinical hours for licensure.

I see Julia’s narrative as reflecting primarily the configuration of the meaning-maker because of the primary role that emotional engagement and reflection appeared to play in her clinical work and interactions with her training environment. There is a focus on the subjective experience of both psychotherapist and client and their internal growth, rather than on the participation in the external training environment and acquisitions of skills and knowledge.

While Julia’s narrative is coherent and there is some chronological portrayal of events, in a way that is consistent with the meaning-maker configuration, it is more a collection of reflections on the field of psychotherapy, her psychotherapy work, and her professional journey.
As I present Julia’s narrative I make comparisons to the reactive case illustration (Tamar), which represents the opposite, non-dialectical, end of the continuum of the feeling-reflecting dialectic. I also compare it to the open to experience case illustration (Sarah), which is also a dialectical configuration (i.e., exploring-committing), but focused on the process of differentiation rather than on the process of psychological separation (See Figure 14).

![Figure 14. The meaning-maker configuration compared to open to experience and reactive configurations.](image)

I hope these comparisons will help clarify the differences among these configurations and more broadly elucidate the distinctions between non-dialectical and dialectical configurations (i.e.,
reactive and meaning-maker, respectively) and between the differentiation and the separation emphases (i.e., open to experience and meaning-maker, respectively).

Julia majored as an undergraduate in English literature and psychology, and these two areas of interest continued to engage her. She began her professional path as a writer of short stories, living abroad and writing. This path “didn’t end up really developing into anything,” and following a period of exploration she began considering the idea of clinical psychology. An important experience in that regard was her work at a bookstore where she was in charge of the psychology section and read through the literature of pop psychology and psychoanalytic theory. She also worked for a psychoanalyst, assisting him with the videotaping and analysis of play therapy sessions, discovering that she was not only fascinated by this work, but also “had a knack for it.” Following another clinical research experience she enrolled in a doctoral clinical psychology program.

Julia began her narrative by debating how much to focus on the professional versus the personal aspects of her story, suggesting the interplay of both. Indeed, she then reflected on the motivation for her professional choice, locating it in her family experiences. In contrast to Tamar (i.e., reactive identity configuration), whose decision to enter the psychotherapy profession was described primarily in terms of her emotional experience, Julia went beyond the level of experience and offered a possible interpretation:

Well, I guess I’m thinking about how much to answer professionally and how much to answer personally. I don’t know I always hear people joke that we don’t choose this profession, it chooses us. I think that I was the therapist in my family before I ever knew that I was doing that. My parents had a difficult marriage… and I think that I was very early on playing mediator… and trying to help them talk about their feelings in more constructive ways… I remember just being their therapist so that was always there. And also a real introspective nature, with my own development, my own questions.
Similarly, when Julia described her undergraduate studies she identified assuming a similar “psychotherapist role:”

In college I was taking writing classes and we would do these seminars where everyone would compare their stories and I was average writer but I was really good editor and helping other people figure out what they were trying to say in their stories, and what kind of conflicts were their characters having, what were they trying to reconcile and I was like a good consultant, I was being their therapist but as writers and I was good at that and I liked it and people got clearer and I didn’t put it together then.

The tendency to occupy a “psychotherapist role” expressed in this quote was characteristic of participants whose narratives reflected the meaning-maker identity configuration. These trainees reported that they have always examined their experience in the world through psychological lenses, often attributing this tendency to a combination of innate predisposition and family experiences. In contrast to narratives representing the reactive configuration in which the psychotherapist role felt more incongruent and there was more clearly a need to learn how to be a psychotherapist, in narratives reflecting the meaning-maker configuration the position of the participant-observer was a familiar one. Indeed, throughout Julia’s narrative the processing of her emotional experience was a thread that went through everything she said, at times implicitly, at other times more explicitly:

It’s always been like an active process for me to know myself, in a very deliberate conscious way.

…after college I felt a little bit confused….and I was struggling with what I wanted to do and who I wanted to be and I felt that the process of going through struggles and getting to know myself better made me a more authentic, more real version of myself. So I think I learned first-hand about the value of investigating difficulty and pain and there’s a reason that you might be struggling with something… I’ve approached my own life that way.
Maintaining the dialectical tension between feeling and reflecting allows a greater range of responses to the challenges of psychotherapy work and training. In Julia’s narrative this manifested in her fluid movement between her attempt to process her experience and organize it and her embrace of ambiguity and not knowing. While she sought to understand herself and others, which involves, at least temporarily, achieving clarity and formulating stable meanings, she also emphasized questioning her understandings and tolerating uncertainty. In discussing her undergraduate studies, Julia expressed one aspect of this dialectic, focusing on the act of asking questions:

I actually enjoyed my English classes much more. I felt like they were more psychologically rich in a lot of ways. I felt like in a way the English classes were asking these fascinating questions and less concerned with the answers, in psychology it was all about the answers of the questions and explaining things which was often very simplistic.

This fluid movement between feeling and reflecting, knowing and not knowing, was most apparent when Julia discussed her theoretical orientation. While Julia identified primarily with psychodynamic/psychoanalytic perspective, she saw it rather than a monolithic model as an overarching umbrella, encompassing multiple and complex theories and ways of thinking. This orientation, the way Julia understood it, allowed for a continuous back and forth between emotional engagement and reflection, between sitting with difficult and confusing feelings and reaching new understandings:

The way I think about psychodynamic approaches… this is oversimplifying it but that we’re interested in the why side of things… I liked the idea that in psychodynamic model that the therapist doesn’t have to have answers, felt more humble, more honest, that things aren’t always so simple and people are complicated, including the therapist. It feels much more dynamic and interesting, and creative to work that way.
I like the psychodynamic model because it feels like it’s coming from a very kind of brave place… Brave in the sense that you are open to exploring things that you don’t exactly know where they’re going to go and you’re open to exploring things that might be painful or uncomfortable or really confusing. That there’s a journey there and that the knowledge and the insight doesn’t come from following particular regiment. It comes from going through the difficult process of getting to know yourself and other people.

The back and forth between feeling and reflecting allows for a range of responses to the internal ambiguity, from willingness to explore unknown internal terrains and tolerating confusing feelings to understanding and organizing one’s experience. In contrast to the emphasis on exploration of new and varied training experiences (i.e., external environment) characteristic of the open to experience configuration, here the focus is on internal exploration; on the psychotherapist’s own subjectivity, which plays a primary role in psychotherapy work:

Now when I’m listening to other people talk about their cases, one of the first questions I wanna ask is… what was the therapist feeling?… what were they struggling with? Because I feel like you get so much information and it’s not only about the client, it’s never only about the client, but I just think there’s such a wealth of information there…

I think that the way that we empathize with clients is by finding a part of ourselves that can relate to what they’re going through… I think that’s what makes us all human and some clients bring us to places that are much more painful because of our own histories, but I think to be able to kind of travel in your own landscape, and be able to go to different places and identify with you know, touch different parts of yourself so you can identify with different kinds of clients is a very important thing to be able to do. And we all have our things that are harder, but I think it takes a certain amount of maturity and self-knowledge to be able to do that and a certain amount of suffering, honestly, to have grown and learned what it’s like to suffer.

For Julia the capacity for deep emotional engagement and for reflection on such feelings is an inherent part of the work. While Sarah, representing an open to experience configuration, emphasized the flexibility that exposure to a variety of experiences afforded her, Julia’s strength comes from the receptivity to the therapeutic process and connecting with various parts of herself. Accordingly, her own life experiences outside of training are considered relevant to her work. There is use of the self in a very personal and unique way:
And also my personal struggles over the last eight years… going through all of that really I think helps me as a therapist ‘cause I see a lot of issues with many clients struggling with issues around dependency and autonomy and trust and many of the issues that I worked on really hard because they were really primary for me. So having gone through all that myself definitely affects the way that I work and what I see.

Julia’s perspective on her way of working is a very personal one. The way she worked and what she saw were inherently informed by her unique journey. There is familiarity with her therapeutic style, which is embedded in a broader understanding of herself. For Julia the importance of engaging in one’s subjective experience and understanding it applied equally to both client and psychotherapist. She viewed self-knowledge as contributing to well-being and sees the psychotherapist’s engagement in that process as promoting the client’s work:

I hope that the that clients when they’re finding it useful, that they are finding it as a way to better understand themselves, and know themselves and hopefully that knowledge helps them minimize their suffering; you know, knowing better what they need or what they’re struggling with.

The therapist who models real genuine interest in what’s happening right now, without a need to explain it or understand it or defend it gets a client who gets very curious about themselves.

Accordingly, Julia stated that her best supervisor was the one who focused on transference-countertransference issues with her. That is, attempting to understand (i.e., reflecting) the complicated matrix of two subjectivities (i.e., client and psychotherapist) in interaction (i.e., emotional engagement). Whereas Tamar, representing the reactive configuration, referred to figuring out countertransference issues as one of her primary challenges, Julia framed it as one of her most valuable learning experiences:
My best supervisor was the one who really helped me begin to work with countertransference more. Because I think that I am, like I said, pretty self-aware and self-reflective and I’m sensitive to emotional states in myself and others. So beginning to trust that more and not being concerned that I’m being too impacted, or to learn how to work with that in a balanced way and to trust some of it, really opened up a whole new level of insight for me. Particularly with this one client… there were a lot of shifting relational dyadic, dyads at play, that were sometimes extremely painful for me and difficult… and really beginning to explore what was happening in me as a way to understand the client better. I think working with him really changed the way that I work.

Having relatively well-developed reflective capacities, Julia further deepened her ability and learned how to best use herself in the work, how to reflect on her emotional experience to understand her clients. There is also recognition of a change in her style as a result of this experience, suggesting familiarity with her way of working and engagement in the process of her development.

What underlies the fluid movement between feeling and reflecting is the ability to be separated (i.e., tolerate difference) and remain connected to others. As Julia described her interactions with her training environment, the tension between separation and connection was apparent. She appears to have had sufficient distance to observe others and yet was clearly engaged and open to be impacted by others:

We’ve [Julia and her therapist] talked a lot about theory and about cases that I treat… I had to videotape me doing therapy and… I couldn’t believe how much I sounded like my therapist. Like I really internalized her voice… I guess the things that worked for me as a client are in there, they’re embedded and they were so automatic… I’ve certainly given her a hard time along the way about the things that she was doing wrong but a lot of that contributed, on a personal emotional level about what I think really works not just theoretically but… what I think is really useful in a therapy setting.

Julia internalized her psychotherapist’s voice and acknowledged the considerable impact she has had on her. Nevertheless, there were things that did not work for her. Moreover, there is a sense that this impact was not just automatic, but also reflected upon as Julia referred to what she
“really thinks works… in a therapy setting.” In other words, there is recognition of difference along with connection and receptivity to her psychotherapist’s impact.

Similarly, when Julia explained what has been helpful in supervision, we can see how as she was exposed to different supervisors and ways of working, her sense of herself as a psychotherapist developed through the identification of difference. There is a sense that such experience of difference was tolerated and appreciated as a way to learn about herself:

Well you see a lot of different ways of working. And I think every supervisee begins to experience that tension of what you wanna do and what your supervisor told you to do and you start to wonder what it is you’re struggling with. And what the issues are that you may have different feelings about or why you’re struggling. I think after working with several different people those things got clearer to me, what exactly I was struggling with.

This quote reflects a very subtle yet important distinction between the meaning-maker and the reactive configurations. While in both identity configurations there is a focus on development of a subjective sense of self as a psychotherapist vis-à-vis another, with the meaning-maker there are clearer boundaries around the self. These boundaries are malleable and in constant flux, but felt.98 Interactions with others are instrumental in recognizing and more clearly defining these boundaries, but there is an acceptance of difference. In contrast, in the reactive configuration there is more ambivalence about difference and desire to self-define through similarity with others.

98 This quote is also similar to a quote made by Sarah (i.e., open to experience configuration), who stated (p. 160) that the more exposure she has had to a variety of experiences the more she developed her “taste,” what she liked and did not like. This is a subtle yet important difference reflecting the distinction between the differentiation and separation levels. While Sarah emphasized more the development of her way of working—adoption or rejection of skills, ideas, models—Julia referred to a more internal process, figuring out the emotional experience of tension, what she was struggling with, as a way of understanding who she was as a psychotherapist. These two levels are intertwined and cannot be clearly separated, as one’s sense of oneself is tied with the specific models, skills, and ideas one adopts, but they represent different foci of attention.
The capacity to tolerate difference and yet remain engaged with another was most clearly expressed when Julia described an interaction with a supervisor whom she found challenging and somewhat incongruent with her style:

I had one supervisor who was really obsessed with limit setting…. she was also I felt very restrictive of me and I felt like it was really difficult to work with her. I did learn a lot from her but… I don’t work that way with my clients. I adhere to the frame and set limits within reason but I’m much more curious about what’s going on and less concerned with immediately stopping the behavior. So having an experience for a year with someone who I was struggling with, around that, was extremely instrumental in me figuring out what was going on for me and why, and… what I care about and how to sort of learn from her, and still keep some kind of my own voice in there.

There is familiarity with and confidence about her own way of working. Julia not only tolerated the differences and remained open to learning from this supervisor, she also used the experience of incongruence to better understand herself and her style as a psychotherapist.

Reflecting on the interview, Julia ended her narrative with the following thought:

I think I’m satisfied with my career choice on a deep level, when I’m working with clients, I wanna be doing this, I like it. But… I feel like I don’t wanna be indoctrinated fully. I don’t wanna absorb a mindset and stop questioning things.

This final statement expresses Julia’s ability to hold the tension between the stability of her professional choice, her sense of herself as a psychotherapist, and the need to continuously question things, and potentially evolve.

In summary, I read Julia’s narrative as representing the identity configuration of the meaning-maker because of its primary focus on the process of psychological separation and Julia’s ability to hold the tension between engagement in her experience and reflection on it and tolerate difference from others.
Identity Configurations: Range and Interrelations

As noted earlier, the six identity configurations presented above are end-points on continuums of identity configurations. Trainees can occupy the entire range of possible configurations—the end-points and any position between them—depending on the tension maintained between the processes of differentiation and separation and the extent to which trainees shift flexibly between dialectical identity tasks.

More than half the narratives (55.2%) were classified as representing two identity configurations (Table 1 shows the different combinations identified in the sample). While theoretically different combinations of identity configurations are possible, certain dual classifications make more sense conceptually and were more prevalent in the sample. Specifically, dialectical configurations (i.e., meaning-maker and open to experience) tended to go together. Similarly non-dialectical configurations (i.e., reactive and structure-reliant) tended to operate simultaneously; of the 16 interviews that received dual classifications, nine (56.3%) were combinations of either dialectical or non-dialectical configurations. This suggests that an underlying individual capacity for fluidity may partly explain individual differences with regard to identity formation.

A combination of dialectical and non-dialectical configurations that was relatively common in the sample, appearing in five narratives (31.3% of dual classification narratives), is the open to experience and reactive (typically a middle-point reactive). These narratives suggest that this combination is a constructive one in terms of trainees’ development, as the open to experience approach promotes a gradual transition from the reactive position towards the meaning-maker (i.e., promotes psychological separation). Specifically, the exposure to a variety of training experiences and the receptivity to the impact of these experiences appear to lead over
time to a more differentiated therapeutic repertoire and to sensitize trainees to what works and does not work for them as psychotherapists. This in turn contributes to a subjective sense of themselves as unique psychotherapists, promoting greater familiarity and acceptance of their personal style. In addition, experimentation with new and diverse professional roles and ways of working naturally encourages greater reflection and processing of one’s experience than familiar and consistent experiences. Another way of thinking about it is that these trainees open themselves to the relatively unfamiliar experience of reflection and are receptive to its impact in the same way that they open themselves to other training experiences.

In what follows I will present two case illustrations representing a combination of two identity configurations. The first is the “ultimate” dialectical identity configuration, a combination of open to experience and meaning-maker, in which there is equal emphasis on the processes of differentiation and separation and fluid movement among all identity tasks. The second case reflects a combination of two non-dialectical configurations, the reactive and the structure-reliant. This case is of special interest as it illustrates the ways in which professional development can be disrupted when the fluidity among identity tasks is low and the interaction between self and context is not a constructive one, impeding professional vitality and resilience. That is, the two cases that follow reflect the gap between the ideal and the undesirable.

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99 Similar to the other cases presented, these two cases represent combinations of end-point configurations rather than middle-point ones. I choose to use these cases since they illustrate my ideas more clearly than more moderate versions.

100 As previously noted, the aspects of my theoretical framework that delineate my view of optimal development and theorize about the developmental paths that different identity configurations may take if occupied consistently constitute a greater interpretive leap from the data. Accordingly, in addition to illustrating the combined configurations, I also present these cases in support of my more subjective conclusions in working with the narratives.
Open to Experience and Meaning-Maker Case Illustration: Samantha

Samantha is a 38-year-old European-American woman. At the time of the interview she was at the end of her fourth year of training. She had completed her coursework and dissertation, and was finishing her pre-doctoral internship in a prestigious university clinic. She was planning to continue at the clinic for another year to complete her post-doc clinical hours required for licensure.

Figure 15. A combination of the open to experience and meaning-maker configurations.

Samantha’s narrative reflects a combination of the identity configurations of open to experience and meaning-maker. Specifically, Samantha’s story of professional development is
characterized by continuous exploration and receptivity to the impact of a variety of training experiences, resulting in multiple and constantly evolving commitments. In addition, her experience in the world is embedded in a meaningful context and continually reflected upon, resulting in a growing understanding of her unique therapeutic style and personal journey. Taken together, this fluid movement between participation in the world and reflection on experience has led, in my view, to the development of a therapeutic repertoire that is multi-faceted, flexible, and deeply meaningful, reflective of Samantha’s unique sensibilities and abilities.

Samantha began her story by commenting that the interview question is “really interesting,” reflecting a repeated theme in her narrative of considerable curiosity and excitement about opportunities for exploration and self-discovery. She then continued to tell her story in a way that was characteristic of her—by placing it in context:

Well, this is really interesting. I think I have to go back even before what brought me to this profession… I’m from a rural town… with really limited opportunities, especially for women…. my mother was the first… woman in her generation to go to high school and then I’m the first to go to college, and when I did go to college, I didn’t really understand the notion of careers… I majored in mathematics and went on to get… a Master’s degree in engineering, and part of the reason why I did that was in my family the idea was you had to do something that you could make money in science and math or always going to provide opportunity. So… I really had no exposure to… the therapy profession at all.

Samantha’s story is rooted in her particular family and cultural circumstances. The personal and the professional are intertwined. Events are placed in a meaningful context. A central theme in the above quote that is characteristic of the open to experience configuration is Samantha’s willingness to venture into new and unknown territories, being the first in her family to go to college and later choosing a profession that she described as foreign to her background.

Samantha went on to describe what brought her to the psychotherapy profession, continuously tying personal events in her life with professional choices. She initially worked as a
computer engineer. Having to return to her home town for personal reasons, she took a position as a math teacher, which she held for 12 years. Since she found teaching math to be a “dead end” job in the sense that professional development was limited (“you never get more than adjunct professorship at most or, you know, instructor positions”), she gradually shifted to “doing alternative education, which meant working with kids who were typically viewed by society as being in trouble or defective in some ways.” This choice to create options for herself where she experienced limited opportunities was typical of her story and consistent with the open to experience configuration. Also reflected in this quote, and consistent with the meaning-maker configuration, is her ability to take a more observatory stance, separating between society’s view of the kids with whom she worked and her own. Samantha had enjoyed this work that had “a really therapeutic element” and described it as one of the things that introduced her to the notion of psychotherapy. She described how she came to seriously consider a career change, referring to interest, positive personal experience with psychotherapy, recognition by another, her job experience, and readiness for change:

In my personal life I actually was going through a divorce. It was really difficult for me and my first therapy experience as an individual was when I was 30 years old in couple therapy… I was very fascinated by it, I found it very helpful. It really helped me get through a difficult period in my life and my couple therapist asked me if I ever thought about becoming a therapist…And it was kind of parallel with what I experiencing in my work life as well. I was trying to do less classroom teaching and more of this counseling and mentoring. And as a result of my divorce and the changes that were inevitably happening in my life, I decided that it was a good time for me to go back to school and I did some career exploration.

At a personally challenging time in her life (i.e., divorce) when some people may understandably seek some stability and comfort in familiar surroundings, Samantha decided to embrace the
inevitable changes and make a career change.\textsuperscript{101} Consistent with the open to experience configuration, Samantha devoted considerable time to exploration. She began with an initial idea and allowed herself to discover new and unexpected options:

I quit my regular job and I substitute taught, which gave me a lot of flexibility in my schedule. And I got a number of different books… I sort of had the idea that I wanted to go into some kind of counseling, but as I did the research and then using other books, I realized there are all these different paths…. So I kind of looked into all of those different ways… different kinds of venues…

After describing the reasons for choosing her particular school, Samantha went on to describe the impact her various training experiences had on her development as a psychotherapist. Reflecting both the open to experience and the meaning-maker identity configurations, her descriptions were characterized by her enjoyment and appreciation of novelty and variety, sensitivity to multiple perspectives and to the particularities of context, and familiarity with her own particular style and preferences. She described the impact of her school’s theoretical orientation on her:

It’s historically rooted in analytic therapy and analytic thought, which again is really foreign to my cultural background. I come from a very pragmatic sort of interdependent community, where people would tend to go to a friend… or their minister and not really use psychological services. And psychoanalysis is about as foreign from that as I can think. And so it was really good…And it actually helps me recognize my differences and where I come from… Most of my clients are graduate students from… other countries… And so I really think for me having an increased awareness of my journey and my culture has really helped me work with people who are experiencing that same thing now in their education.

Opening herself to different views helped Samantha recognize her uniqueness and become more aware of her own journey. There is a back and forth between her experience in the world—

\textsuperscript{101} This is a typical characteristic of the open to experience configuration. Sarah (previous case illustration of open to experience) too had a similar approach, locating opportunities for self-expansion in situations that could potentially be experienced as threatening.
characterized by exploration and receptivity—and her processing of her experience to learn about herself. In addition to increased self-awareness, encountering new and potentially incongruent perspectives contributes to self-expansion:

I read a lot of things from different theoretical orientations ‘cause I like the way it kind of opens up possibilities, I guess, for me. Like I like it when I read something that views something from a different angle…even though I don’t think it always goes back to mother [referring to psychoanalytic perspective], because that’s been planted in my head, now that’s a possibility for me to think of that. And…the way I was raised, I definitely never would have felt comfortable asking somebody about their mother….So even that… Just exploring that as a pathway for me to understand what my biases are, what my assumptions are, and it might free me to ask somebody something or to be aware of something or hear something that I wouldn’t have heard.

Similarly, whereas many students would prefer that schoolwork supports and be related to clinical work, in a situation in which the two diverged, Samantha identified an opportunity for expansion, framing the two experiences as complementary:

I wasn’t intending to be in a hospital, it just kind of happened that way and it was wonderful … I was supervised primarily by a psychiatrist. So…I had a very different kind of experience as a result of that, and it really did complement the coursework… at school… the courses were focused on higher-level functioning adults… we were talking about the importance, for instance, of transference and countertransference, which I think assumes a certain clientele, a certain setting… and the perspective of the psychiatrist, when I’m working in an acute, short-term place was very much more focused on biological bases, what can you do to stabilize a person in crisis. So it was really two sides. It was kind of the putting the fire out at work and then thinking about these other issues that weren’t necessarily present with the clients that I was having… it also stretched me to think about notions of transference and countertransference… that was kind of a nice contrast.

Also apparent in this quote is Samantha’s sensitivity to the particularities of context (e.g., certain clientele, specific setting). Similarly, as she discussed her clinical work and the gradual move to being a professional and assuming greater responsibility for her treatments, she spoke about the need to attend to clients’ specific needs and tailor her responses accordingly. What underlies such a way of working is the ability to deal with variety, unpredictability, and constant change:
Understanding that kind of like it’s on me at this point. I have enough cases that I’m not going to stay around and wait for a lecture on how to do somatic treatment management with someone whose English isn’t very good. I have to come up with my own way to do this, and right now basically. It really, I think, identified for me areas that I didn’t have a big conceptualization or strategy for… The novelty… of experience here has really generated on a meta level a skill for generating skills, as opposed to just applying a skill or locating a skill.

Consistent with the open to experience configuration, Samantha recognizes the commonality in human experience along the uniqueness of clients:

I really think that there is something collective about human experience, but I think there is something really important about the differences in human experience, and I mean I hope my clients get a profound sense of their unique specialness as a result of being in therapy.

She attempts to meet clients’ unique needs by expanding her way of working:

I would suspect that that’s one reason why a lot of people drop out of therapy is because the modality isn’t congruent with their life experience. So I’ve tried to just get as many as possible so that I can try to relate to the client.

Accordingly, she defined her psychotherapist role in multiple terms, depending on the clinical setting and clients’ needs. Such multiple and changing definitions require ambiguity tolerance, holding multiplicity, and flexibly adapting to change:

I think it really depends on the client, what they’re coming for. I see myself as a resource, as part of the bigger institution here at the university…I see myself as someone who is trying to facilitate the academic achievement and health of students. So that could be being a person who listens…teaches a skill…provides an alternative perspective…provides referrals to other services. These aren’t necessarily exclusive. And that seems really different to me from how it was in other organizations that I was at… being more of a gatekeeper and a protector when I was working with children. Also as a parent educator …last year, I saw myself much more as like a mentor and a coach…this year, I occasionally get to be the person that gets to sit and listen and be supportive or be curious, but oftentimes I feel like I’m a person that needs to be assessing for risk, making sure that the person is getting something in the moment that they can utilize.
Reflecting on the psychotherapy profession, she tied the two together, acknowledging the uniqueness of both clients and psychotherapist:

I do have a great fear that that insurance companies and just the state of our finances in this country right now are going to dictate certain forms of treatment and try to seek…. sort of a best way of doing things, as opposed to understanding that each individual may have a different best way of doing things. Both the therapist and the client might need different things. So I’m all for generality, but I also think that we have to take into account that people are very unique and special and maybe shouldn’t be managed from a business model. Psychotherapy maybe isn’t best managed from a business model.

Consistent with her attempt to flexibly adapt to clients’ needs, Samantha defined her theoretical orientation as integrative, pragmatic, and client-centered, focusing on the particularities of the situation and responding accordingly:

I think my theoretical orientation right now would best be described as sort of pragmatic and integrative. I’m definitely client-centered and I have to take into account sort of all the logistics of the situation, like do I have 10 sessions? Is this person in crisis? again, I like to always kind of think of where does this person come from in terms of their way of thinking about the world even, ‘cause I tend to be more of a relativist. Despite my background in science, I’m not really sure that I view therapy as being part of that empirical, objectivist, you know, scientific realistic paradigm.

Samantha could reflect on her theoretical approach and place it within a broader context, recognizing the existence of multiple perspectives. Her exposure to a variety of experiences shaped and informed her familiarity with her own particular approach.

Samantha touched on the dialectical relationship between the processes of differentiation and separation directly when she described how she developed her theoretical orientation:

I guess my theoretical orientation is derived from really an exploration of my experience and my reactions to theoretical orientation as well. And I definitely think that I developed skills and therapeutic technique both by exposure in classes and practicum and clinical work… it was really a dynamic of life experience and reflection, coursework, and practicum, along with supervision.
Exposure to a variety of experiences, both congruent and incongruent, has contributed to the refinement of her therapeutic style, and in turn her developed sense of self has impacted her adoption of professional commitments:

I developed my theoretical orientation as much from things that I recognized that I didn’t like, as much from things that I did like. What I tried to do was take parts of all the theories that I came across that made sense. Again, with my world view, with my experience working with people as a teacher and a mentor, and with how I would want to be treated by another person.

In summarizing her thinking about theory and its place in her psychotherapy work, Samantha presented aspects of both the open to experience and the meaning-maker identity configurations. There is a constant dialogue between the theories and ideas she encountered and her sense of what worked for her. The continuous back and forth between the processes of differentiation and separation and among all four identity tasks—exploration of a variety of experiences and stimuli, receptivity to the impact of experiences, emotional engagement, and reflection on one’s experience—resulted in a story that is “constantly rewritten”:

I tend to think of history as being something that’s constantly rewritten. Like how I think of my history, my development as a psychologist, will probably be different story-wise in five years. I probably will remember different things from it. So I think… I tended when I was going through different theoretical orientations to kind of notice part of like- Oh, this doesn’t fit for me that we should always necessarily be concerned with mother. Maybe sometimes we should be, and certainly if clients want to go there, we should be curious about that. But I think… when I was being exposed to theory, I would say, Gosh, you know? That just doesn’t make sense with my experience in the world. And given that I’m the one that has to do the therapy…

There is a sense of authority and self-confidence about having her own unique way of working. There is also a sense that her particular way of working would continue to evolve and expand, becoming increasingly flexible, multi-faceted, and personal as Samantha continues to explore
and open herself to various learning opportunities, engaging in and reflecting on such experiences.

A Case Illustration of Structure-Reliant and Reactive: Jane – A Case Study of Burn-Out

Jane is a 33-year-old European-American woman. At the time of the interview she was at her sixth year of training. She had finished her dissertation and was at the end of her internship working with children and young adolescents.

Jane’s narrative reflects an outlier in the sample in terms of the extent of distress she expressed and the disappointment she experienced in her training environment and professional choice. In that sense, she represents an important voice that can provide insight into the challenges involved in psychotherapists’ identity formation and the potential role of the training environment in promoting or curtailing professional growth.

Jane’s narrative reflects a combination of two non-dialectical identity configurations: structure-reliant and reactive. More broadly it is an example, in my view, of the deleterious impact that decreased fluidity among identity tasks can have on one’s development. It also shows the way in which identities emerge out of the interaction between the individual trainee with his or her capacities and the context with its particular challenges. In Jane’s case, we see an individual whose capacities are often overwhelmed by the extent of her challenges and a training environment that does not seem to guide her through these challenges satisfactorily. In other words, the capacity for fluidity is both an individual characteristic and a result of a particular self-context interaction.
In response to the interview’s primary question, asking her to tell the story of her professional development, Jane said that she felt “like I’m on an internship interview,” suggesting some discomfort with the question and the situation. Read in the context of the entire interview, this statement reflects, in my view, Jane’s general struggle to process her experience and make meaning. Accordingly, the interview is not experienced as an opportunity, but rather as an evaluation of some sort.

\[\text{Figure 16. A combination of the structure-reliant and reactive configurations.}\]

\[\text{102 John (structure-reliant case illustration) too began his story with a similar statement. Both narratives represent combinations of structure-reliant and reactive configurations, though in John’s narrative the structure-reliant is more dominant.}\]
Jane began her story by talking about how she got to the psychotherapy field, focusing on college as her starting point. She stated that she always had the idea of being a psychologist or a psychiatrist in the back of her mind and decided on psychiatry because it was better paid and more respected. However, discovering that she did not enjoy the biology classes as much as her peers did and given the long process involved in becoming a psychiatrist, she decided to change her focus to psychology and apply to graduate school. When I asked her about her early interest in psychiatry/psychology she initially struggled to identify what it was that attracted her to the mental health field. She then talked about a job she took after college working at a methadone clinic for five years prior to applying to graduate school:

I think something that really affected me there was just seeing the… kids come in with their parents, you know, where the parents were getting their methadone… The kids were there and I just felt like the kids were really kind of left behind… there was nothing set up for them, they were just going to school, but coming home to their parents’ drug habits… I really felt like that was kind of the population that I wanted to target. But… I mean, my interest in psychology started way back, and I really don’t know when it started. I’ve tried to think about that and I definitely, it was hard, I couldn’t think of it, I can’t think of it.

Talking about her reaction to these kids was the part in the interview in which Jane was most engaged and seemed to find meaning in psychotherapy work. While she recognized the impact of this experience on her, she limited its meaning to the identification of a population of interest and did not associate it with a possible underlying motivation to pursue this career path. She then continued to wonder about what drew her to this profession, struggling to create a meaningful narrative. This shift between recognition of something meaningful and difficulty formulating and constructing meaning of her experience was characteristic of her narrative. Moreover, as I will

103 There are first hints here of the reactive identity configuration, which become meaningful only when interpreted in the context of the entire interview. Specifically, it appears that Jane’s decisions were impacted by considerations that were external to the self (as opposed to being guided by familiarity with oneself), such as choosing a profession that was respected and realizing her decreased interest through comparisons to peers. In addition, locating her decision to study psychology in her college experience rather than placing it in a broader and more personal context was often characteristic of the reactive identity configuration.
try to demonstrate, it is the pervasiveness of lack of formulation that underlies in my view Jane’s
depth dissatisfaction so early in her career.

When I asked Jane if there was a point of decision to study psychiatry, she wondered if she got the idea from a TV show she had watched as a child in which the father character was a psychiatrist. She then went back to the interview question\textsuperscript{104} (which was printed on a card and given to her), referring to a particular part and saying that she did not understand what I meant by it:

\begin{quote}
I don’t know if you ever saw the show Growing Pains… The dad was a psychiatrist or a psychologist, and I’m wondering if that’s where I got the idea because I don’t know anyone who was a psychiatrist or a psychologist, so I don’t know. I mean, I didn’t really admit that in any of my internship interviews- [laughs]… But… maybe that’s where I got the idea and it seemed kind of neat, but as long as I can remember- I mean, I think when I was very little, I wanted to be an actress like, you know, a lot of little kids do, or a singer or whatever. And then quickly after that, it became a psychologist, so it’s just always been something that was with me. I don’t know. I don’t really know what you mean by what contributed to your development.
\end{quote}

There is an apparent difficulty to make sense of a professional choice that involves considerable investment of time, and financial and mental resources. Jane’s confusion about the meaning of my question (i.e. what contributed to her professional development) is also significant. While this can be a difficult question to answer given its open-ended and comprehensive nature, I do not see it, nor was it my experience with other participants, as a particularly confusing question. Surprised by her confusion and struggling to be empathic towards it, I found myself repeating the question rather than elaborating on it in a more helpful way:

\begin{quote}
Interviewer: You know, who you are today as a psychotherapist, or whatever you think influenced you.
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{104} The interview’s first and primary question read as follows: “Please tell me in as much detail as you can the story of your professional development as a psychotherapist. While telling me the story, I would especially like you to touch on what brought you to this profession, what contributed to your development and in what way, and where you see yourself in the future.”
Jane: I don’t know. [laughs] I don’t know, it’s still kind of vague. I guess I’ve had some good supervisors who’ve affected me. I don’t know what other people say. [laughs]… I can’t even think of…. Okay, I haven’t really thought about that. But in terms of where I see myself in the future [sighs], it’s like another hard question ‘cause at this point, I’m kind of burned out on psychology [laughs] and every psychology and I don’t know, I don’t know.

It is Jane’s focus, I believe, on providing the “right answer” (i.e., “what other people say”) and her difficulty creating a story that is her own that made it into a challenging question for her.

Jane skipped the part of influences on her development and spoke about her current experience of “being burned out on psychology.” There seemed to be a pervasive experience of “not knowing,” which extended to the past and to the future; there was no personal understanding of what led her to the profession and no sense of the future. The creation of a meaningful narrative was disrupted. If one thinks about identity as emerging out of people’s attempts to construct a life story, the breakdown of the narrative can suggest impediments to the development of a meaningfully experienced sense of self. This became increasingly apparent as Jane’s interview continued.

When I asked Jane to tell me more about the feeling of being “burned out,” she elaborated:

There’s been a lot of things that have disappointed me… like the clinic that I’m working in, I don’t like the way a lot of it is run. I feel like the role of psychologist is being blurred and it’s unclear what someone with a PhD is supposed to be doing when… a social worker is doing the same thing, psychiatrists doing the same thing sometimes… I just feel like… I don’t really know what my role is… and I just question how much of an effect I’m having with the kids, and I guess it’s part of the business and… maybe you don’t see the effect…. I realize you don’t see the effect now, but who knows… what kind of effect am I having for the kid’s future. But it’s just… not as rewarding as I thought it would be… I think it’s also the age group. I think I need to work with older kids who are more motivated to be there and not just being brought there by a parent who is looking for a babysitter for 45 minutes.
Jane was clearly having a difficult time. She desired clearer role boundaries and to feel the impact of her work. However where she sought clarity she experienced considerable ambiguity—she was not sure what her role was and what kind of impact, if any, she had on her clients’ lives. It seems too that the environment with which she interacted—whether it was the internship setting or her clients’ parents—worked against her, blurring the boundaries and undoing her hard work, respectively. Experiencing herself as a babysitter in the eyes of the parents suggests to me the extent of her sense of being unappreciated and of her impact as a psychotherapist going unrecognized.

Trying to get more of a sense of Jane’s training experience I asked her about graduate school. She said she chose a school that was half Cognitive-Behavioral (CBT) and half psychodynamic in orientation because she thought she “was more of a CBT person than I think I am.” She added:

> It was supposed to be kind of half and half, half psychodynamic and half CBT, and…I found that it was. I mean, I don’t know. It was, it was okay. Sometimes I’m like I don’t really know what I learned, but I have to just kind of (laughs), I don’t know, just trying to take it in faith that I did learn enough to prepare me for where I am. I guess I was learning all the time. I don’t know. Anything else you want to know about that?

This paragraph is emblematic of Jane’s narrative and, in my view, of her developmental process. There is a sense of things not consolidating into something that she could feel she had and could hold consistently. Again, the difficulty of constructing a narrative—elaborating on her experience in graduate school—is apparent. There is a repeated pattern of having something (e.g., “I guess I was learning all the time”) and of undoing it the next moment (e.g., “I don’t know”); a sense of clarity followed by the experience of not knowing. While there was much I wanted to know about Jane’s professional development, feeling that the middle part of the story was missing, reflecting a growing frustration on my part I chose to move to the next question.
I asked Jane the second interview question (“How would you describe your theoretical orientation and how did you come to develop it?”), stating self-consciously that this was even more of an “internship question.” She responded:

Oh God. [laughs] All right. I always felt like I leaned toward CBT because I don’t know why psychodynamic stuff just frustrated me. And then in grad school, I guess I had to do it. You had some psychodynamic and some CBT supervisors and I had a psychodynamic supervisor who just completely turned me off to that orientation… the way I learn, I ask a lot of questions and I’m not asking questions to challenge people, but I really want to know and I think with her, she would make a lot of very broad statements and she couldn’t back it up… I remember it was just so frustrating… it was like I was playing a game and I didn’t know the rules because they changed all the time. Like you know, you do one thing with one person, but then, you know, the next day that’s not okay. And it was very unclear to me why it switched and why I couldn’t… I did this thing… that you told me last week, but this week it’s not okay… I could never tell what was going to please her or upset her and I didn’t know it was going to be okay.

Jane demonstrates here the impact that training experiences can have on one’s development. A supervisory experience has the power to diminish trainees’ interest in a certain perspective or a way of working or alternatively to help trainees to expand their style and inclinations. This was a repeated theme in many of the narratives in the sample. With supervision, as with psychotherapy, I believe, there are better fits than others. What also emerges from this passage, and consistent with the structure-reliant identity configuration, is Jane’s desire for consistency and clear rules; for that which applied last session with one client to be effective the next day with another client. Her confusion and distress are palpable. Playing a game in which rules keep changing can be a considerably destabilizing and frustrating experience. There is also a desire to please her supervisor, reflecting a more reactive configuration. She went on to compare this experience with the psychodynamic supervisor (and model) to her experience with the cognitive-behavioral (CBT) model:

I really appreciate like the concreteness of CBT. There’s a point. I like the empirical part. I like the things that are evidence-based. (sighs) I don’t know, there just seems to be a
rationale. I think I’ve gotten frustrated with psychodynamic professors who can’t really explain why we do something or why this works or when and it’s just too mushy for me. In this quote Jane articulated more clearly what worked for her and what did not. However, when I asked her to tell me more about what the CBT model meant to her, she again struggled with formulating a coherent response:

What I like about the way I try to use- and again- I mean now- but- and then again I’ve kind of even evolved more than that. I don’t- now I don’t really- I mean I say that I’m CB- okay, I’m thinking about what I’m going to say when I go to job interviews too. I don’t know how I’m going to describe it.

She then regrouped and explained that while behaviors and thoughts were important there were other important issues that needed to be addressed:

But I really feel like it’s important to… kind of empathize with the feelings and I don’t know if this would be more CBT or more psychodynamic, but I just think it’s important to let the kids know it’s not their fault and, yeah, it sucks, and I’m angry at your dad too and I’m sad that your dad’s not there, and you know, if you were a dad… how would you treat your son? I don’t know, I don’t know where that really falls.

Here too, Jane’s voice emerged more distinctly. It seems that the attempt to affiliate herself with one perspective or another, to define herself in unambiguous terms, confused her and masked what she did know. Interestingly, when I asked her what I see as a more ambiguous question of how she understood her psychotherapy work, following some clarifications, she found her voice more easily. She discussed the challenges involved in working with children when often the presenting issues appeared more systemic and her attempts to intervene at both levels. I wonder if the focus on her view of her work and the freedom from the need to define herself within certain external constrains (i.e., existing theoretical models) allowed her to access what she knew and formulate it more clearly. Nevertheless, she then went back to her sense that her work was being undone by the parents. I find that at this point in the interview I became more active in helping her to formulate her answers, trying to keep the narrative from breaking down again.
When I asked Jane to tell me about current challenges she experienced on her professional journey, she tried to understand what exactly I was looking for, “with regard to just therapy and clients or supervisors or clinics?” I invited her to talk about what she wanted. She then spoke about her doubts and concerns about her professional future, again expressing her current distress:

I’m concerned about what kind of job I’m going to get and if I’m going to like it and if psychology was the right field for me [laughs] to be in… I think I wish I’d become a vet or something with animals instead of kids, but it’s really too late for that now. I think my husband would kill me and my parents would [laughs] definitely throw in the towel. So no, I’ll be a psychologist for better or worse somehow, and so I mean I feel like I guess it’s broad enough that I can find some place that I fit in… it’s a little bit repetitive of the stuff I said before, that, you know, am I making a difference?… not even just me, but… do psychologists really help people?… Is therapy a really legitimate way to change people? I think I’m kind of questioning that. I guess a challenge is [laughs] how am I ever going to make any money and this is a really stupid job to be in [laughs] because I put in a lot of time and I’m not going to really see anything from it. That’s frustrating. Jane questioned not only her own impact as a psychotherapist but the legitimacy of the entire psychotherapy endeavor. There is a great sense of meaninglessness. She wished she made a different professional choice and remains in this profession for reasons that are external to herself—the reactions of her family. There was some hope to find a place where she could fit, but also considerable doubt about her ability to find satisfaction, even a financial one, in this profession. When I asked Jane how a place where she would fit may look like, she expressed again a desire for clearer boundaries around her role:

Interviewer: Do you have any kind of idea how that would look like? A place where you could fit?

Jane: Maybe a place where social workers do social work? [laughs] Psychologists do psychology stuff? I mean… I think it’d be great. I think I could do such better psychology work if I had a social worker working on the same case as me who did the case management stuff. But I don’t… But I think I could be a much more effective
therapist- well, I don’t know, maybe I could. [laughs] If I had a social worker doing all that stuff.

Reading this passage in the context of the entire narrative I hear the need for unambiguous role distinctions as a wish for a clearer self-definition, a more developed sense of self that can withstand self-doubts and find meaning in the work.

I then asked Jane about her training program, what she found helpful and what was missing. She said that certain supervisors were helpful. When I asked her to elaborate she again emphasized the importance of clarity. In the face of all that was “fuzzy” in psychology, Jane desired specific feedback and a clear rationale:

I really appreciate like more specific feedback… plan and why are we going to do this, what is the purpose, what’s the goal, how we know we’ve gotten a goal. I just feel like too much in psychology is fuzzy and it’s like, well, you don’t really know if your intervention made a difference or you don’t know… what your goal is and how you know if you even reached it. So I don’t know, I appreciate supervisors who have just been very focused, I guess, and way less broad. I have one [supervisor] she’s so sweet, but… I don’t get anything from her. It’s just such a waste. I hate going to supervision with her because it’s nice and fine, she sits there and listens, but it’s like, well, what should I do? And… it’s just like, oh, just wait and just sit there, and maybe you can think about this. But I’m like, okay, well, I’m thinking about it, but… I don’t know what you want me to do with it, so that’s really frustrating me. I really like the supervisors who are a lot more directive.

The challenge of tolerating the ambiguity inherent in psychotherapy work is apparent. Similarly, when Jane talked about what was missing in her training she wished for more experience with treatment modalities that offered more “clear-cut ways of dealing” with people and were “more recognized:”

I really wish, I really want to get more experience and more familiarity with like manualized treatments, and I want to be like, oh, I know this, I know that one. I want to have the manuals. I want to- anything more and even more and even like specific- I mean, I’d like to- you know, I wish I could say, I need a DBT or I wish I could - you know, I don’t- I don’t know what else would be comparable, but just kind of more- I don’t know, more recognized, you know, and clear-cut ways of dealing with- just with people. I wish I could have that under my belt. I just think that those are like skills that
you have, that everyone knows what they are. They’re marketable, they’re like a bullet point on your resume.

This quote expresses the structure-reliant configuration in which one seeks to cope with the ambiguity in the work by trying to establish structure and clarity. The reactive configuration is also reflected here in the wish to acquire skills that are recognized by others, the desire to *have* something under her belt, and the apparent struggle to formulate her response. Indeed, it seems that what was missing for her in her training experience were the sufficient resources to deal with the considerable ambiguity in her work and an established sense of herself as an effective psychotherapist. These two qualities manifested continuously in the ways in which Jane responded to the interview questions and interacted with me. She experienced my questions as vague and confusing, she struggled to formulate coherent responses when she was asked for self-definition, and she sought clearer guidelines from me.

Considerably informative I think is the noticeable pattern in Jane’s narrative of a continuous back and forth between doing and undoing; making self-statements and undermining them; achieving clarity and becoming confused again. Along with a strong voice of a sense of confusion, futility, and meaninglessness, there is also a more brittle voice that expressed some hope for making an impact and for knowing and having. However, this voice was repeatedly “undone” by the more pervasive voice of meaninglessness. Struck by the recurrence of the phrase “I don’t know,” I tracked Jane’s use of the verb “to know” in conjunction with the “I” pronoun throughout the narrative\(^\text{105}\) to amplify the voice that centered on the experience of knowing. I highlighted the phrases in which the verb “know” is in the affirmative. This “I-poem” constitutes 5% of Jane’s narrative.

\(^{105}\) This was informed by Phase II of the method of the “listening guide”—the construction of I-poem (see p. 87)—which I used in the analysis of the narratives (Gilligan, Spencer, Weinberg, & Bertsch, 2003).
I know
I don’t know
I know
I didn’t even know
I really don’t know
I don’t know
I don’t know
I really don’t know
I don’t know
I don’t know
I don’t know.
I don’t know, I don’t know
I don’t know
I don’t really know
I don’t know
I don’t know
I really want to know
I didn’t know
I didn’t know
I don’t know
I don’t know
I don’t know
I don’t know
I don’t know, I don’t know
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I don’t know
I don’t know
I don’t know
I don’t know

*How we know*

You don’t really know
You don’t know

*How you know*

I don’t know
I don’t know

*I know*

I don’t know
I don’t know
I don’t know
I don’t know
I really don’t know

Reading this I-poem, I thought, in the face of such a pervasive sense of not knowing, no wonder Jane sought clarity and tangible outcomes.

Concluding the interview, I asked Jane how it was for her to talk about these issues. She said the following:

It was fine, it was fine. I don’t know… I guess sometimes I’m not really sure what you’re asking and it was confusing but… I guess it’s just stuff that I don’t really think about that much… I just don’t really think about it….like how did you think of- how did you come to psychology? Like that’s refreshing, because I really don’t know.

*Summary and discussion.* Jane’s narrative is of particular interest, as it is an example of a professional development going awry. Jane had certain capacities for reflection and ambiguity tolerance, and she operated in and interacted with a specific training environment that posed certain challenges (e.g., work with children involving dealing with chaotic and complex systems) and optimally offered sufficient guidance and support. Jane’s case is an example of a non-
constructive interaction between self and environment, which disrupts the development of a complex, flexible, and personally meaningful therapeutic repertoire and a familiar sense of oneself as a psychotherapist.

Trying to understand the path that Jane’s development has taken, I have come to see the decreased processing of her experience and thus the failure to construct meaning as the primary issue, impacting her sense of vitality as a psychotherapist and her ability to cope resiliently with professional challenges. This manifested in two ways. First, due to the limited reflection on her experience, which would have created some observatory distance and would have helped her to place her feelings in a meaningful context, Jane was often overwhelmed by the extent of her challenges. This in turn added to her self-doubt and sense of abandonment. More broadly, the reduced reflection on her training experiences interfered with her ability to use her training experiences to learn about herself as a psychotherapist and consolidate what she has learned into a knowable and meaningful therapeutic style. That is, there was a limited back and forth between the level of differentiation (i.e., experience in the world) and separation (i.e., engagement in experience and reflection on it), which interfered with a development of a sense of self as a psychotherapist that can be felt and owned. In turn, in the absence of a sense of self that is knowable and experienced as effective, the challenges of the work became much more difficult to contain, leading to destabilization.

Working with Jane’s narrative I could not escape the question of what role her training environment—supervisors, mentors, peers—played in her development. As described before, when I asked Jane what has contributed to her development, she became confused by the question and despite my clarifying responses did not provide an answer that directly addressed my question. However, the answer she did give, albeit not the kind I was expecting (i.e.,
identifying the impact that certain training experiences had had on her) is quite telling. She said that she did not know what she has learned. Indeed, in the absence of a clear sense of having learned something, it makes sense that she would have a hard time identifying influential factors. When later in the interview I asked her the more concrete question of what she found helpful and what has been missing in her training, she spoke about the value of direct feedback from supervisors and her wish to have learned more treatment modalities that offered structure. She made another reference to her training environment during the interview when she discussed two supervisors whom she found vague and unhelpful. There is a clear message that comes out of Jane’s narrative and it is the wish for her training environment to help her attain more clarity in the face of considerable ambiguity.

Hearing Jane’s distress and sense of futility at such an early stage of her career, and recognizing the brittle sense of herself as a psychotherapist at such an advanced stage in her training, I cannot avoid the feeling that her training environment somehow failed her. I am reminded of Jane’s identification with the kids she saw at the methadone clinic who were “kind of left behind” by their parents to cope with considerable chaos and uncertainty, and wonder about the parallel process.

Using my own experience with Jane during the interview, as the person who asked “internship questions” and possibly evaluated her, I can only speculate about the role that her training environment might have played in her development. While I interviewed close to 30 people, my experience with Jane stood out. Whereas I typically found myself constantly impressed by people’s stories—the variety and richness of experiences—and enjoyed listening to them and engaging with them, with Jane I had the experience of a growing frustration and a desire to give up on her. I struggled with the repeated confusion with which my questions were
met and found it difficult to “obtain” a story from her. I was able at times with clarifying questions and a more empathic stance to help Jane construct her story. I wonder if these shifts in my experience with her represent the two opposing experiences that Jane described in the interview with the frustrating (and possibly frustrated) supervisors who made broad statements and the supervisors who were more direct and provided specific feedback. Is it possible that too many of the people who were responsible for Jane’s training got into a dynamic with her of mutual frustration, resulting in a mutual resignation?

Optimally, what would have been desirable, in my view, is for the training environment to recognize Jane’s particular challenges and help her develop her reflective capacities, beginning with provision of structure and concrete feedback and gradually helping her to tolerate more ambiguity (i.e., a more fluid movement between the two modes). More importantly, what was required in my view is reflection on the process of Jane’s professional development, helping her to recognize her particular strengths, challenges, and limitations and work with them and through them, promoting awareness (and acceptance) of her style as well as self-expansion.

On a related note, Jane’s narrative represents an important voice of doubt about the effectiveness of psychotherapy, which many participants expressed, though in more subtle ways. There should be room to discuss this and similar questions concerning the profession and one’s potential place within it in the context of training. I will elaborate on these points further when I discuss the implications of my ideas for training.

The “Take-Home” Message: Fluidity and Self-Awareness

This inquiry began with the observation that current cultural and professional circumstances pose unique challenges to psychotherapist trainees in terms of identity formation.
My goal was to gain a better understanding into the ways in which trainees develop their identity and sense of self as psychotherapists within this challenging context. I hypothesized that there would be different ways to develop an identity and was interested in learning about this (potential) variety. Informed by the literature on identity formation, I had the notion of striving for a single core identity versus holding multiple identities as different ways of organizing one’s sense of self as a psychotherapist. I also had the working hypothesis that multiple identities might be a more suitable approach to identity formation than a single identity, given the myriad and the nature of the challenges with which psychotherapy trainees cope. Beyond these tentative ideas, my approach was exploratory in terms of the form and content that identity may take.

The theoretical framework I have developed working with the rich body of data includes both a normative process of identity formation that characterizes all trainees and differences among trainees in terms of their approach towards identify formation. Specifically, the data suggest that all trainees develop along the lines of differentiation and psychological separation, perform the four identity tasks, and hold the tension between dialectical tasks to varying degrees; all narratives contain some reference to professional development in terms of acquisition of skills, attitudes, ideas, and ways of working (i.e., differentiation); to the subjective sense of oneself as a psychotherapist as similar or uniquely different from other psychotherapists (i.e., psychological separation); to exploration and entertainment of various options for self-definition and to adoption or rejection of ideas, commitments, and identifications (i.e., exploring and committing); and to emotional engagement in one’s experiences and processing of such experiences.

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106 While I expected and was interested in variation in terms of identity formation (my interest in this topic began with an observation of the different approaches my classmates seemed to have towards using theory in their psychotherapy work), I was also open to “discover” a general process of identity formation that all trainees go through.
experience (i.e., feeling and reflecting). That is, I offer the concepts of differentiation-separation and the identity tasks as a general framework to think about the identity formation of psychotherapists in training. Consistent with my initial hypothesis, the data also suggest that there is meaningful variation in terms of how trainees perform these identity tasks and develop along the lines of differentiation and separation. I express this variation in the data in terms of the different identity configurations.

The existence of variation in identity formation raises the question of whether there are better ways to develop one’s identity as a psychotherapist than others. This in turn leads to the question of what would be considered “a good identity” (Schachter, 2002) or a desirable developmental process for psychotherapists in training. As noted previously, working with the data I came to view optimal professional development as one in which the identity that emerges fits the needs of both the individual trainee and the professional context. Such an identity allows for vitality in the sense that trainees make full use of their capacities, can capitalize on their strengths, and challenge themselves in ways that promote growth rather than frustration. It also allows for resilience in the sense that trainees can meet the demands of the setting in which they work effectively, thereby benefiting the setting and the population they serve as well as experiencing a sense of competence. I argue that such a constructive interaction between self and context relies on fluidity and self-awareness. I will briefly summarize each of these aspects separately.

Fluidity

Underlying the variation in identity formation—the different identity configurations—is a quality I termed fluidity. The dialectical identity configurations of open to experience and meaning-maker involve increased fluidity among identity tasks and represent identities that fit
the needs of both trainees and the context, allowing for vitality and coping with challenges flexibly with a range of responses. In contrast, the non-dialectical configurations of structure-reliant, reactive, and the more theoretical configurations of the wanderer and analyzer, reflect reduced fluidity and represent attempts to cope with professional and contextual challenges with a narrow range of responses (i.e., by minimizing them or submitting to them). When the non-dialectical configurations are occupied more consistently, it interferes in different ways with the development of a therapeutic repertoire that is personally meaningful, reflective of trainees’ capacities, and flexible in dealing with various demands.

I understand the quality of fluidity to be a function of trainees’ capacities (e.g., ambiguity tolerance, ability to hold multiple perspectives and ways of being, adaptation to change) and the context within which they operate—the particular challenges it poses and the support and guidance it provides. That is, it is a continuously changing balance as both trainees and the context, while having particular qualities, are also in constant flux.¹⁰⁷

To summarize, to promote optimal professional development, in which both trainees and the context benefit, frequently occupying the dialectical identity configurations, and especially the combination of both, is most advantageous. The dialectical identities, representing the ability to flexibly negotiate engagement in all identity tasks, constitute movement among various identity configurations (including occupying temporarily non-dialectical configurations) in response to changing circumstances. There is much to be gained, certainly when doing psychotherapy work, from occupying different modes of organizing experience. I view the

¹⁰⁷ Both trainees and the context with which they interact change over time. Trainees change as they grow and develop, acquiring experience, skills, and self-knowledge. There are also more small-scale continuous changes such as mood that can impact trainees’ resources at a particular point in time. Contexts too do not remain consistent, as different factors change over the course of a day (e.g., the make-up of client population or the work overload in a particular day) or over longer periods of time (e.g., in management or way of working).
continuously changing nature of identity as its most vital and resilient quality. Which identity configurations will be occupied at certain times will always be a function of individual capacities and contextual demands. What allows for the movement in identity configurations, in different approaches to identity formation, is the presence of changing contexts, of multiple “others.” It is through interactions with a variety of training and professional contexts that trainees can express, discover, and create different and novel aspects of themselves.

Self-Awareness

While my analysis of the data persuaded me of the important role of fluidity in promoting professional development of psychotherapist trainees, the data further suggest that trainees differ in their capacity for fluidity. Accordingly, in my view, what is equally important for a constructive interaction between trainees and their context, is for trainees to be aware of their particular therapeutic style, their strengths, and areas of challenge. There is and always will be variation in terms of ways of working and developmental paths, and there is room and need for different kinds of psychotherapists. It is essential I believe that psychotherapists know both what they offer their clients and the ways in which they are limited, so they can find professional settings that fit them where they can use their strengths and challenge themselves at appropriate levels. This applies I believe to all trainees, regardless of their range and flexibility. This is especially true when trainees choose a more specialized path. Jane’s case, in my view, illustrates the ways in which a mismatch between one’s expectations and capacities (i.e., emphasizing consistency, effectiveness, and clarity) and the clinical setting in which one works (i.e., working with children in a somewhat chaotic environment) results in considerable professional dissatisfaction and possibly decreased effectiveness.
Increased self-awareness will not only promote suitable professional choices, but would also sensitize trainees to their limitations and allow them to work through them and potentially expand their abilities. Most importantly, underlying this call for greater awareness is—in my view, and supported by the data—that being a psychotherapist is a unique and personal endeavor. Encouraging self-awareness communicates this message, promoting both growth, as trainees work through their areas of challenge and expand their style, and acceptance of one’s way of working. It is my belief that such a message of the personal nature of this trade would have been helpful to Jane. It promotes an attitude of self-acceptance and emphasizes the importance of fit between psychotherapist and context/clients. More concretely, such a message could have potentially pointed Jane in the direction of finding a more suitable setting where she could have experienced greater satisfaction. I will elaborate on these points when I discuss implications for training in the Discussion chapter.

Validity, Reliability, and Generalizability

My approach to the issues of validity, reliability, and generalizability—concepts that are critical to a positivist paradigm and suggest a firm boundary between truth and non-truth—is not to reject them as incompatible with qualitative research, but to reconceptualize them to fit the epistemological underpinnings, goals, and procedures of my particular project. This approach is consistent with other writers in qualitative research, such as Kvale (1994/1996) and Lincoln and Guba (1985). In what follows I will discuss the way I approached these issues in my study. Whereas in quantitative research reliability precedes validity, I will begin my discussion with the

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108 In a sense my recommendation for promoting self-awareness privileges the process of psychological separation over differentiation. I suggest that awareness can compensate for decreased differentiation (i.e., for a therapeutic repertoire that is specialized and less broad).
issue of validity, which plays a more central role in my study, and follow it with discussions of reliability and generalizability.

*Validity – Quality Control and Credibility of Findings*

The question of what is valid knowledge is inherently related to the more philosophical question of what is truth. In positivist tradition, knowledge assumes an objective reality, and validity is typically limited to measurement, focusing on whether the study measures what it intends to measure (Hoyle, Harris, & Judd, 2002). This definition of validity does not apply to most qualitative research, which is often guided by non-positivist paradigms. Indeed, many qualitative researchers have developed their own definitions of validity and have often generated or adopted different terms they consider more appropriate for qualitative research, such as trustworthiness, quality, rigor, confidence in the findings, and credibility of findings (Davies & Dodd, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Seale, 1999; Stenbacka, 2001). Although often reconceptualized from its original positivist definition to fit qualitative research, it is nevertheless widely agreed that the quality and credibility of findings are considerably important. Nutt and Morrow (2009), in discussing the issue of validity across various traditions in qualitative research, argue that “one thing that differentiates qualitative research from anecdotes, or mere journalism, is the validity, or ‘trustworthiness’…of the study” (p. 576).

Within the constructivist framework, which guides my thinking and investigation, knowledge is a social construction of reality. Accordingly, the validity of knowledge is constituted through dialogue and negotiation of competing constructions among members of the community (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Schwandt, 1994). That is, the validity of my findings can be achieved through discussions among researchers and readers concerning the relations among my theoretical framework, the goals of the study, my research questions, the research design and
method, the findings, and the phenomenon under investigation. I define validity as *quality control throughout all stages of knowledge production and credibility of findings.* In striving for validity I have attempted throughout the entire process of investigation, from the formulation of the goals of investigation to the writing of the report, to follow the guidelines outlined by Kvale (1994/1996). Specifically, Kvale provides an overview of validity issues throughout seven stages of a research project: thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, validating, and reporting. In what follows I will shortly describe my thinking and the actions I took at each of these stages.

**Thematizing**

Validity with respect to thematizing refers to the soundness of theoretical presuppositions and their direct relation to the goals of the study and the research questions (Kvale, 1994/1996). In my study these three aspects were a “closely integrated unit” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 5), each informing and impacted by the other. Specifically, my study began with my own observation that the current state of the psychotherapy profession and cultural circumstances pose considerable challenges for psychotherapists’ identity formation. Exploring the literature on psychotherapists’ professional development and identity formation, I found support for my personal observations and impressions, which motivated me to pursue this project. In the Literature Review chapter I attempted to make a sound argument for the considerable challenges beginner psychotherapists face in developing their identity and the importance of gaining a better understanding of this subject. Consistent with my conceptual framework, which emphasizes the subjective and pragmatic nature of knowledge, my primary goal for this study was to gain a deeper

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109 My discussion of validity is informed primarily by Kvale (1994/1996) and Miles and Huberman (1994).

110 Most of the issues in the following discussion were discussed in greater detail in respective sections throughout the Research Design and Method chapter. Here I will attempt to provide a brief review, focusing on validity issues.
understanding into the subject of identity formation of psychotherapists in training by focusing on the lived experience of participants and applying this knowledge to training. Accordingly, my research questions concerned different aspects of participants’ identity formation as well as their experience of their training. For a more elaborated discussion of the rationale behind the research questions and its relation to my theoretical presuppositions, please see the section on research questions in the Conceptual Framework and research Questions chapter (p. 57).

**Designing**

Designing refers to the adequacy of the research design and methods (Kvale, 1994/1996). I addressed this issue in great detail in the Research Design and Methods chapter. Restating it briefly, the way I came to conceptualize identity and my approach to going about studying this subject were informed by my constructivist worldview. My research questions followed directly from the theoretical and conceptual framework and goals of the study and in turn guided decisions concerning sample construction (e.g., defining the case, sampling), choice of method (i.e., interview), and management of data.

**Interviewing**

The validity of the interviewing process involves the trustworthiness of participants’ reports and the quality of interview (i.e., careful questioning of meaning and continual checking of information) (Kvale, 1994/1996). My interview questions were open-ended and touched on different aspects of participants’ professional development. I invited participants to share with me their own story of becoming psychotherapists, their subjective experience of their personal journey. While participants naturally determined the boundaries of their accounts, varying in terms of levels of disclosure, I see no reason to doubt the credibility of their accounts. The interview was aimed at participants’ unique experience rather than particular responses. I
experienced participants as genuine and generous with their experience and found their stories trustworthy. Nevertheless, in the rare case that one or a few participants intended and managed to create a seemingly credible story that was not completely truthful, given that findings were developed based on the entire data set (i.e., 29 interviews), such exceptions would probably be too few to undermine the theoretical framework that I have developed.

In terms of the interviewing process, I attempted to strike a balance between allowing participants to narrate their own story, with little interruption, and achieving a shared understanding. This attitude was consistent for all interviews. However, while I conducted all the interviews myself, and in that sense maintained some consistency across participants, naturally my interviewing style changed from one participant to another. I see this variation in interaction as an inherent aspect of the phenomenon of identity formation, which always takes place in an interpersonal context and changes accordingly. I dealt with this variation by documenting my experience of the interactions with the different participants following each interview and taking these data into consideration in the analysis process.

Transcribing

With regard to transcribing, the goal is to attain a valid translation from oral to written form (Kvale, 1994/1996). The majority of interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriber, whereas six interviews were transcribed by research assistants. All transcribers received clear transcription guidelines (See Appendix H). I performed random checkups, listening to the digital versions of interviews and comparing it to the textual translation. Overall, transcription was of high quality, accurately representing the recorded interviews and producing coherent narratives with few missing words.
Data Analysis and Validating

Kvale (1994/1996) distinguishes between the stage of data analysis and that of validating. Validity with respect to data analysis refers to posing valid questions to the text and making sound interpretations. The stage of validating reflects judgment about the forms of validation that are relevant to the study, the application of concrete procedures of validation, and the consideration of the appropriate community for a dialogue on validity.\footnote{Kvale (1994/1996) conceives validity as a broad issue that should be addressed throughout all phases of the study. In validating he refers to the stage following analysis in which specific actions are taken, intended at attempts to falsify findings in order to ascertain their trustworthiness.} Translating these concepts to my own theorizing process, I understand the analysis phase as the more exploratory and ambiguous phase in which I explored the data from different vantage points and was continuously searching for a satisfying organizing framework. I think of the validation phase as my attempts to ascertain validity by deliberately searching for sources of invalidity. In my work process these two phases were intertwined. Throughout the analysis of data I reflected on the ways in which I could test my interpretations and took various measures in that direction. Similarly, as my ideas consolidated and I took deliberate actions aimed at attempting to falsify the findings, in the process encountering areas of theoretical weakness, my thinking changed and evolved and in that sense the analysis of narratives continued. While I understand the distinction Kvale makes between the two phases, I see it more as a back-and-forth movement with a gradual change in emphasis; the more I developed my ideas, the more I gradually moved from an emphasis on analyzing the data and developing concepts to assuming a more deliberately critical stance towards the emerging findings.

Miles and Huberman (1994), in discussing the subject of validity and verification, make a distinction similar to Kvale’s (1994/1996) phases of analysis and validating. They distinguish...
between “tactics for generating meaning” (p. 245) and “tactics for testing or confirming findings” (p. 262). Throughout the theorizing process, I used tactics of both kinds, with a gradual shift in emphasis from generating meaning to testing findings. Accordingly, in the following discussion I will focus on validity issues during the theorizing process as a whole rather than clearly separating between the phases of analysis and validating. Nevertheless, I will address the aspects of validity outlined by Kvale with regard to analysis and validating. When applicable, I will refer to the various tactics outlined by Miles and Huberman to describe the procedures I used in this back-and-forth process of analysis-validating-reanalysis-validating and so on.

Posing valid questions to the text. The primary question with which I approached analysis was of a considerably open nature: looking at the different ways in which psychotherapists in training develop their professional identities. Accordingly, analysis initially was exploratory: reading the narratives through wide lenses, and in the process noting “recurrent patterns and themes” that emerged from the data (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 246). As analysis progressed, different, more specific questions were posed to the texts, emanating directly from my evolving constructions of the narratives and guided by theory. Questions addressed different aspects of the process of identity formation as well as various facets of professional development. For example, I asked how ambiguity is treated, how experiences of similarity and difference are coped with, how theoretical orientation is developed, and how one’s therapeutic role is defined. I posed these questions to each narrative as well as explored them across narratives. My questions changed and evolved as a result of a continuous back-and-forth process between the data, my interpretations of the data, and at times existing theory. That is, the validity of the questions I posed to the narratives derives from the identifiable link between my questions at each phase of analysis and
my understanding of the data at the time. I demonstrate these links in the section about analytic strategy in the Analytic Method and Results chapter (p. 83).

*Soundness of interpretations.* With regard to the soundness of my interpretations, I used different intuitive methods to generate meaning, including identifying “plausible connections” between different themes and qualities, tentatively “clustering” qualities that seemed to go together, and using “metaphors,” often employing participants’ own words, to express complex notions or impressions (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 250). Gradually I moved towards greater “conceptual/theoretical coherence” (p. 261) as metaphors and interrelationships developed into clusters, and then to theory, which offered an organizing framework for the initially seemingly disparate clusters.

As four preliminary clusters of identity formation began to emerge, I made “contrast/comparisons” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 254) to better understand their similarities and differences. Then with the goal of validating the emerging clusters and looking for potentially additional patterns of identity formation, I began analyzing the rest of the narratives with the attempt to *replicate the findings across the data set* (p. 273). I used this method of verification following each theoretical development, examining my reconceptualizations across the data set for replication and revising them accordingly. My ideas continued to evolve until I arrived at a framework that could be replicated consistently across the data set. Throughout my attempts to replicate findings, I also followed up on surprises (p. 270) when these occurred. Thus, for instance, as I was looking for the emerging clusters in the rest of the narratives I got a sense of a continuum of clusters rather than of distinct categories. This discovery led to a deconstruction of the initial clusters and to reconceptualization of my ideas. I checked the *meaning of outliers* (p. 269), exploring in detail interviews that were less clearly classifiable,
such as combinations of identity configurations or middle-range cases. To better understand the differences and similarities between the emerging clusters I also used *extreme cases* (p. 270) that appeared to be more clearly different from one another. In addition, I focused on one particular case, which stood out among the other narratives for the experience of burn-out that the participant reported (i.e., the case of Jane). I saw this case as an opportunity to explore what happens when professional development is compromised. It was helpful to examine my concepts under more extreme circumstances and to think about implications for training.

Taken together, these methods helped me to develop a theoretical framework that accounts for the considerable richness and complexity of the data, resulting in the inclusion of both categorical and dimensional concepts. Throughout the theorizing process, as ideas and concepts began to emerge, I continuously checked out rival explanations (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 274), looking for the most exhaustive and precise concepts and examining different ways to configure the interrelations among the different concepts. Thus, for example, as I attempted to identify the qualities of the context within which trainees develop, I entertained various possibilities, eventually settling on the qualities of ambiguity, complexity, and constant change as having the most explanatory power (this aspect of the theory was later taken out with the goal of simplifying the ideas presented and placed in Appendix K). I also explored different ways to organize my emerging concepts in relation to each other, often turning my frame on its head. As analysis progressed the primary concepts with which I was working became more apparent, and I focused more on the different possible interrelations between them.

Throughout this process, I used the *feedback* (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 275) of other readers to test the soundness and clarity of my ideas and to open my thinking to other perspectives and ways of thinking. In addition to the close guidance of my advisor, for almost a
year I worked closely with a research assistant. I used her help to test my evolving theory, asking her at different points in the analysis to apply my ideas to narratives (e.g., classify narratives to one of the four emerging clusters; compare specific interviews along specific dimensions). I asked her to document her experience during analysis, including areas of theoretical confusion, dilemmas, methods she used, ideas she found helpful, and so on. This feedback was incorporated continuously. More importantly, I invited her to bring her own unique perspective, to challenge my ideas, and to expand them with her own. I attempted to create an atmosphere that promoted open and lively exchanges. This process was invaluable in terms of the development of my thinking. I also used the help of three colleagues who read different accounts of my ideas at different points in the theorizing process and gave me their feedback. This too was considerably valuable, helping me both in terms of the development of my ideas and their communication. Finally, as I will describe in detail in the reliability discussion, when my ideas began to consolidate, I created a coding system and with the help of two research assistants examined our ability to apply my interpretive framework consistently across raters, with satisfying results.

In reflecting on the validity of my findings I would like to address two broad threats to validity that Maxwell (2005) discusses: researcher bias and reactivity.

*Researcher bias.* One of my primary biases in conducting this study was my personal sense, informed by the literature, that the field of psychotherapy and the training environment of psychotherapists pose unique challenges with respect to identity formation. In the Literature Review chapter I describe these challenges, referring to current theoretical pluralism, client diversity, proliferation of treatment modalities, changes in psychotherapists’ knowledge and authority, and the accelerated technological changes impacting human interaction. Although I did not conceptualize these challenges in those terms, re-reading my literature review, I realize
that it could have been written in terms of the qualities of ambiguity, complexity, and constant change, which I later identified in my analysis (as noted earlier, in the theoretical framework I presented I describe challenges in terms of trainees’ experience rather than in terms of these three qualities). In other words, the motivating force in bringing about this study—current professional and cultural challenges to identity formation of psychotherapists—ended up being an important part of my theoretical framework. Specifically, the different ways in which psychotherapists in training develop their identities are conceptualized as different ways of coping with these challenges—attempting to minimize them, being taken over by them, or engaging with them. In addition, while my stance was primarily exploratory, both in terms of content and form of findings, the one tentative hypothesis I did make in my proposal was that participants may present with a variety of identity configurations, ranging from more consistent and stable constructions of identity to more fluid and multiple constructions of identity.

My concern here is obvious: To what extent do the findings support my initial observations and hypotheses and to what extent are they impacted by them? Reflecting back on the theorizing process, I am fairly confident that while my particular lens and specific sensitivities undoubtedly shaped my thinking in ways of questions posed, themes identified, and interpretations made, my account of the data, one of many possible accounts, is a credible one. Specifically, while my ideas about current challenges in psychotherapy training served as the motivation for the study, I did not expect them to be part of the answer to the question of how trainees form an identity. My analytic approach was very much exploratory. I began analysis with complete puzzlement as to the possible answers that may come up and remained so for a considerable part of the time during initial stages of analysis. The initial clusters that began to emerge were the result of intuitive identifications of patterns based on multiple readings of the
narratives and guided by theory. They were distinct, initially unrelated, clusters (conceptualized along the lines of distinct “personalities”) and did not include any reference to the above challenges or to the fluidity/stability aspect of identity. The deconstruction of the clusters, leading to the identification of the contextual challenges, was a “bottom-up” decision emanating from the recognition of the continuous nature of the data. Similarly, the identification of the specific challenges followed a continuous reformulation of the clusters along various components, looking at similarities, differences, and redundancies and clustering components into various overarching categories. Finally, the ideas of identity configurations and fluidity among dialectical identity tasks, ideas that are consistent with my conceptual framework and way of thinking about clinical work, emerged fully only at the final phase of analysis, as I was looking for contradictory data and again attempting to account for the variation within the data.

*Reactivity.* Reactivity refers to the impact of my presence, as the investigator and interviewer, on the interviewing process or participants (Maxwell, 2005). One aspect of such impact is the nature of the accounts participants provided in response to me. Indeed, participants differed in terms of the scope and boundaries of their stories. This variation is probably the result of participants’ attributes interacting with my own. While my particular presence may have impacted the level of self-disclosure, I am confident about the sincerity of the accounts participants did choose to provide. In order to deal with the threat of reactivity as well as allow participants to tell their story in their own unique way, I limited my questions to clarification questions and asked more elaborated questions when participants seemed to finish their story. Such questions, guided by theory on identity formation, typically concerned elaboration of points of decision making, conflicts, dilemmas, identifications. In that sense, although I did not ask directly about identity formation, I did guide participants in that direction.
Reporting

The final stage of reporting involves writing a report that is a valid account of the findings and that considers the role of the reader in validating the findings (Kvale, 1994/1996). Accordingly, throughout the writing process, I attempted to accurately document the long process I have undergone since embarking on this project. I strived to describe the rationale behind my choices and actions, the different procedures I followed and decisions I made, and my reflections on my actions. In writing, I attempted to balance between providing an accurate account of my work with all of its complexity and particularities and maintaining clarity and brevity. That is, I wanted my readers to be able to read this report with a critical eye and find answers to all their questions, as well as understand my ideas and remain engaged and interested.

I conceive as my target audience anyone who has an interest in identity formation, psychotherapists’ professional development, and more generally qualitative research. Such readers can examine the credibility of my findings from various perspectives and at different stages of investigation, according to their own particular sensibilities and interests, as well as pay attention to qualities of writing such as clarity and appeal.

From a more action-oriented perspective, my ideas would be most relevant for psychotherapists in training and those involved in the training of psychotherapists (e.g., training directors, clinical supervisors, advisors). Specifically, psychotherapists in training could compare my conceptions against their own experience in training and see if they can relate to my ideas and use them to understand and organize their experience. People involved in the training of psychotherapists could too evaluate the soundness of my ideas based on their past experience, examining whether my proposed framework resonates with their own impressions and observations. In addition, they could examine whether such a perspective is useful in thinking
about issues of training, touches on pertinent issues, and can encourage and point to specific actions that can be taken to enhance the training of psychotherapists. I address the implications of my ideas to training in the Discussion chapter.

Validation in qualitative research is a process that continues long after the findings are produced. The ideas I have presented here will hopefully continue to evolve, change, and acquire greater sophistication and credibility as they are negotiated through discourse with other researchers and readers (e.g., the dissertation committee, review boards of journals, audiences at conferences, future research). The findings also have the potential to acquire pragmatic verification if they are effectively applied to the training practices of psychotherapists and proven useful.

Reliability: Freedom from Bias and Consistency of Findings

While the importance of the validity of findings is generally accepted among qualitative researchers, the concept of reliability is more controversial (Golafshani, 2003; Stenbacka, 2001). Indeed, given that qualitative research privileges the uniqueness of participants’ voices and the richness, complexity, and context of the accounts told, the idea of consistency of findings may seem irrelevant. In writing about interview research, Kvale (1994/1996) maintains the definition of reliability as consistency of findings, applying it to the particular needs of qualitative research. Specifically, he discusses issues of consistency of findings at three stages of the inquiry, examining the reliability of the interviewing, transcribing, and analysis phases.

As I reflected on these three phases with respect to reliability, I realized that I covered some of these issues in my discussion of validity, thereby testifying to the interrelations of these concepts. My efforts to maintain the consistency of interviewing and transcribing were described
in the previous section. Thus the following discussion will focus on aspects of reliability during the analysis phase, mostly in its advanced stages when findings began to consolidate. I define reliability in the context of analysis as freedom from bias and consistency of findings. More specifically, I examine whether other readers/coders who applied my theoretical framework to the data would reach similar conclusions.

As mentioned previously, during middle stages of analysis, I worked with a research assistant whose task, among others, was to classify narratives according to the evolving theory. Overall, there was considerable consistency between my classifications of interviews and her classifications. We engaged in lengthy discussions about the classification process, focusing on both consistent and inconsistent ones. This process was vital in the development of my ideas. During a more advanced stage of my analysis as I was taking more deliberate measures towards verification of my ideas, I developed a coding system intended to examine the reliability of my interpretations of the data. My goal in creating the coding system was to examine the goodness of the concept of identity configurations, specifically the four end-point configurations of open to experience, structure-reliant, meaning-maker, and reactive\textsuperscript{112}—are these concepts clear, sufficiently elaborated, coherent, teachable?

I chose to focus on the concept of identity configurations for the purpose of testing the reliability of my interpretations for several reasons. First, these four identity configurations were the first constructs to emerge from my analysis of the data and in that sense are most closely related to the data in terms of level of interpretation and thus are more easily identifiable. Other aspects of the theory, such as the identity tasks and the processes of differentiation-separation,

\textsuperscript{112}The two additional, more theoretical, configurations of ‘the wanderer’ and ‘the analyzer’ were not included since they were not fully present in the data.
are one step removed from the data and represent ideas that are at a higher level of abstraction. In
addition, the identity configurations are also the constructs in my theory that most clearly reflect
the variation within the data. Such variation is needed in order to examine the soundness of
certain interpretations over others. Finally, the four identity configurations are, in my view,
potentially the most useful concepts in my theoretical framework in terms of thinking about how
trainees develop their identity. Thus, I wanted to examine the extent to which these ideas were
 teachable and most importantly whether they were indeed reliable interpretations of the
narratives. I will describe the development and application of the coding system in detail in the
following section.

*The Development of a Coding System*

Coding was applied to short passages from the narratives rather than to whole
narratives. Based on my extensive experience with the data, I assessed the classification of
whole interviews to be a time-consuming task that would require in-depth understanding of the
theory and its application and considerable familiarity with the narratives. My concern was that
given the time constraints of the study I would not be able to do this task justice and thus
unsatisfactory reliability scores could be attributed to insufficient training rather than to faults
with the theory itself. Thus, I decided that greater feasibility compensated for the relative loss of
complexity. In addition to the practical considerations, this decision also made conceptual sense.
Given that interviews often reflected more than one identity configuration and that individuals
are likely to embody and shift between various identity configurations it made sense to use short
passages assumed to reflect different configurations that are expressed in various interviews.

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113 Coding whole interviews would have meant to classify an interview as representing one or more of the four
identity states.
That is, the coding examines whether these passages can be interpreted consistently across raters as reflecting one identity configuration rather than another.

**Coding.** As noted, coding involved classifying short passages taken out of the narratives to one of the four identity configurations. It included a list of 80 statements (20 statements per identity configuration).\(^\text{114}\) Coding was both categorical and continuous. For the categorical coding, raters were asked to determine which *one* of the four identity configurations was more likely to make this statement (i.e., circle one of the four identity configurations). In addition, raters were asked for each statement to rate on a seven-point rating scale the extent to which each identity configuration is likely to make this statement (ranging from 1- not likely to 7- most likely). Thus, if coders thought a statement expressed a single identity configuration, the continuous rating would be ‘7’ for that configuration and ‘1’ for the other three configurations. However, if there was a secondary configuration it would be rated according to its relative presence (See Appendix L for a segment from the coding system).

I chose to use both categorical and dimensional ratings because it allowed me on the one hand to test the ability to distinguish clearly and consistently between the different identity configurations (i.e., through the categorical coding) and on the other to address the complexity of the data (i.e., through the continuous coding). In addition, since passages were taken from interviews that reflected more than one identity configuration it was reasonable to assume that passages, even when chosen carefully, may express more than one voice. Whereas the

\(^{114}\) While I could classify all narratives to one or more of the four identity configurations, they differed in terms of how ideas were expressed and thus how classification decisions were made. For some narratives, classification was more context-dependent, embedded in underlying themes of stories and anecdotes. Such classification was more impressionistic and I would suspect more challenging to do consistently across raters who are not sufficiently familiar with the theory or the narratives. Other narratives were more striking, containing passages that expressed ideas more directly and succinctly. I tended to use statements from the latter, as they were more appropriate for the coding system I developed in which coders were required to rate decontextualized and relatively short statements that convey certain ideas.
categorical coding reflected the primary identity configuration, the continuous coding allowed expression of such multiplicity of voices. Finally, comparing between categorical and continuous ratings could illuminate the thinking process of raters as they attempted to classify passages. For instance, if a passage was classified categorically as structure-reliant, but on the continuous rating received only a slightly lower rating for the identity configuration of reactive, this would suggest that the rater seriously debated between the two options. Alternatively, if the statement received a much lower rating on the reactive rating, it could suggest that the rater saw some of that identity configuration in the passage but thought it more clearly reflected structure-reliant.

Passages were taken from 14 interviews. For nine of these interviews, at least five and up to 12 statements were included in the coding. This allowed looking at the consistency of rating not only across the categories of identity configurations but also within interviews. That is, looking within interviews, do coders tend to classify interviews consistently as reflecting one or combination of two identity configurations? Are their classifications consistent with mine?

Recruitment and training of coders. Initial recruitment of coders was done via email, which described the coding task and was sent to students in the Master Clinical Psychology Program at Teachers College. Potential research assistants were interviewed. During the interview I gave people short passages taken from the narratives and asked them to freely reflect on them. I later gave them brief descriptions of the four identity configurations and asked them to classify the passages to one of the four identity configurations. This allowed me to get a sense of their interpretive abilities in addition to their prior relevant experience. I accepted three

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115 Each interview participating in the coding was initially classified by me to reflect a primary identity state and often times a secondary identity state. Statements chosen reflected these classifications.
research assistants. Their participation was voluntary for the purpose of gaining research experience.

The three coders participated in an eight-hour long training, which spanned across four sessions and was instructed by me. During training, coders learned the theory, focusing on the four identity configurations of open to experience, structure-reliant, meaning-maker, and reactive, and practiced coding statements taken from the narratives or made up by myself. They were also given practice statements to work on independently and we went over their ratings and discussed them at length during group meetings. For more elaboration of the training of coders please refer to Appendix M.

It was a pleasure working with all three coders. They were engaged, dedicated to the task, and enthusiastic about the study and their part in it. Throughout the training I found them to be open to learning and comfortable about asking questions and sharing their confusion or divergent ideas. This process too was vital in the development of my ideas, clarifying areas of incoherence or insufficient theorizing.

At the end of the training period, I felt that one of the three coders did not achieve reliability during training. That is, she often had an idiosyncratic way of understanding and interpreting the written statements, leading to inconsistent performances. Nevertheless, I decided to include her in the coding in order to examine the boundaries of reliability by comparing reliability scores of the three coders versus the two. Appendix N shows reliability results with the ratings of the third coder included.\footnote{Despite my concerns, the reliability scores including the third coders were substantial, ranging between .67 and .79 ($p < .001$).}
Following training, each of the coders received a digital file and a hard copy of the coding material containing 80 statements, each followed by categorical and continuous scales. They all had an elaborated account of the theory, which I gave them during training. They were instructed to work independently and had three weeks to complete the coding and email me their ratings.

Reliability Results

Table 2 (in the following page) shows reliability results for the coding of 80 statements. The reliability scores of the two coders and my own are included. Consistency is computed for categorical (Cohen’s Kappa and the Generalized Kappa) and continuous (Pearson Correlation and Intra-Class Correlation) coding for each pair of raters and across raters, respectively. Reliability scores range from .78 to .92 ($p < .001$). These scores suggest that raters who learn the theory can apply the concepts of the four identity configurations with substantial consistency to written statements.

I also examined the consistency of ratings within interviews, comparing the ratings of coders to my own classifications of the interviews. Overall, coders’ ratings reflected my classifications of the interviews. Please see Appendix O for elaboration on this issue.

Post-Coding Discussions

Following the coding period, I met with the three coders separately and later as a group to discuss their experience throughout training and coding. I also sent each of them the statements they coded in a way that was inconsistent with my own ratings and asked them to write their rationale for that coding. In what follows I will first discuss the feedback from the two coders
whose ratings were included in the reliability computations. I will then focus on the third coder’s feedback in greater detail, as it may illuminate more clearly problems with training or the theory.

Table 2

*Reliability of Categorical and Continuous Coding for Pairs of Coders and all Coders*

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<th>Coder A</th>
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<td><strong>Continuous Coding</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Intra-Class Correlation (ICC)</strong></td>
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*aTwo-way mixed single measure type of ICC.

**p < .01. ***p < .001.
Two coders’ feedback. Both coders reported that they felt that at the end of training they had a good understanding of the theory and of how to apply it to coding. They thought that training was structured well, gradually shifting the focus from theory to its application. During training, they reportedly felt comfortable asking questions and expressing their own ways of thinking and found the group discussions helpful in terms of clarifying ideas. They found the practice of working on statements independently and then discussing them together as the most helpful aspect of training.

In terms of the coding process, coders found the statements to be of varying degree of difficulty, with some statements requiring more deliberation than others. In those cases they found the inclusion of the continuous rating helpful, as it allowed them to express this complexity. Nevertheless, overall, they felt fairly confident about their final ratings. This confidence was reflected in the continuous coding, in which coders rated how representative statements were of each of the identity configurations. Looking at the pattern of coding, the two coders rated most statements (76% and 89% of statements) as reflecting a single identity configuration, consistent with their categorical rating. This suggests that for the majority of statements they saw only one likely classification. When they did rate statements as likely to represent more than one identity configuration (i.e., gave a statement a higher score than 1 for more than one identity configuration), their ratings were limited to two identity configurations. Moreover, the second rating was usually a mid-range rating\(^{117}\) (i.e., 2-4 on a 7-point rating scale), suggesting that when more than one identity configuration was evident, it was usually clear which one is primary.

\(^{117}\) One of the raters on her second rating gave only mid-range ratings, whereas 6% of the other rater’s second ratings were high-range ratings (i.e. 5-6 on a seven-point rating scale), suggesting that for 6% of the statements, she seriously debated between two possible classifications.
Exploring with coders aspects they found challenging in terms of the coding, they reported that differentiating between structure-reliant and reactive (i.e., non-dialectical configurations) and especially between meaning-maker and open-to-experience (i.e., dialectical configurations) identity configurations was more difficult than between other pairs. Coders’ ratings that were inconsistent with my own classifications follow a similar pattern, thus supporting coders’ subjective experience.\footnote{When coders wrote down their rationale for the inconsistent classifications, they almost always reclassified the statements consistently with my own classification, suggesting that when they were making their choices, they indeed debated between my classifications and often one that represented a similar position on the dialectic continuum. I should add that when I read their rationale I could often see the validity of their interpretations, indicating again the possibility of reading the statements from two related perspectives.} This suggests that it was clearer to coders whether a statement reflected a non-dialectical identity configuration (reactive and structure-reliant) or a dialectical one (meaning-maker and open to experience). The challenge seems to lie more in terms of identifying which identity tasks are addressed in the statements, thus determining which identity configuration is more likely to be represented (i.e., exploration for open to experience, or reflection for meaning-maker/commitment for structure-reliant, or feeling for reactive), as well as whether the focus is on differentiation (open to experience and structure-reliant) or psychological separation (meaning-maker and reactive). This suggests that the idea of fluidly moving among dialectical identity tasks may have more theoretical soundness and utility. It also reflects the intertwined nature of differentiation and psychological separation and thus the difficulty in making clear theoretical distinctions between them. Finally, I think such distinctions may be easier to make in the context of whole interviews and are more difficult to apply to short decontextualized passages.

*Coder C’s feedback.* Coder C had a similar experience of training as the other two coders and found it to be satisfactory in terms of preparing her for the coding task. While coding was
challenging at times, she felt good about her ratings. Indeed, it should be mentioned that while she did not obtain sufficient reliability at the end of training for her ratings to be included in the reliability scores, her reliability scores, though lower than the scores of the other coders, were nonetheless substantial (See Appendix N). With regard to coding, she too found the statements to be of varying degree of difficulty. She reported that one of the challenging aspects of coding for her was selecting the most relevant part of the statement to focus on, feeling that sometimes statements changed emphasis, and thus possible classification, mid-way. At these times, deciding between two classifications was a matter of guessing for her.

Another important observation the third coder made, of which she became aware as she was writing her rationale for ratings that were inconsistent with my classifications, was that her self-perception at times impacted her rating decisions. Specifically, when she read statements with which she identified, she tended to rate them in a way that was consistent with her view of herself. Thus, to use her example, if she read a statement she could see herself make, even though it was most consistent with a structure-reliant identity configuration, she would not consider this classification since she does not think of herself in those terms.

Finally, Coder C stated that at times she used potential “signposts”\textsuperscript{119} indiscriminately, associating certain qualities with specific identity configurations.\textsuperscript{120} To use her own example, she reported that while she was aware that theoretical models can be used and applied in a multitude of ways and thus are not representative of one identity configuration or another, she typically

\textsuperscript{119} During training I attempted to sensitize coders to certain themes or markers that tend to be characteristics of each identity configuration and can be helpful in classifying statements. For instance, beginning to doubt oneself professionally because of difficulty tolerating negative feelings in clinical work tends to characterize the reactive identity configuration. However, I emphasized the importance of understanding such markers in context and trying to understand the statement as a whole, its main theme or themes.

\textsuperscript{120} The qualities Coder C used were not the ones to which I referred in training, but rather heuristics she developed for herself.
associated psychodynamic and eclectic orientations with the open to experience identity configuration. That is, she tended to interpret theoretical self-definitions people made as representing specific identity configurations and did not give sufficient attention to how people practiced these choices, which could be in many different ways.

Exploring Coder C’s written rationale for ratings that were inconsistent with my own classifications, I noticed a few repeated patterns, which may explain some of the inconsistency during training and the relatively lower consistency in coding. Specifically, these patterns were: focusing on details at the expense of identifying the main theme, making assumptions and adding meanings that are not called for by the text, and applying general laws rather than focusing on the speaker’s perspective.

I would like to illustrate these points with an example. The following is an excerpt from Samantha’s narrative:

Despite my background in science, I’m not really sure that I view therapy as being part of that empirical, objectivist, scientific realistic paradigm. I actually kind of think of psychology more of being- if it is a science, it’s a very new science, and so I have more of a post-modern kind of view on things in general…so the notion of empirically-validated treatments and sort of coming up with a one, you know- it’s not one size fits all… it definitely didn’t appeal to me.

I classified this statement as open to experience primarily because it discusses theoretical orientation, which touches on differentiation (the task of commitment) and goes against the idea of applying a treatment model indiscriminately, thereby hinting at the need to adapt to clients’ unique needs. The speaker identifies herself as postmodernist, as opposed to espousing a more objectivist worldview, in a way that suggests multiple truths versus a single objective truth. If I were to identify a “signpost” it would be the phrase “it’s not one size fits all,” which also
conveys in my view the main idea of this statement. Coder C classified this statement as structure-reliant. This would be in my view the least likely classification, as in this identity configuration individuals do search for general laws to simplify experience. Underlying Coder C’s classification was her reading of the self-definition of “postmodernist” as another structure and thus reflective of structure-reliant. This rationale illustrates some of the issues that repeated for her.

First, she tended to focus on a specific part of the statement, the self-identification of the speaker as “postmodernist,” and missed the last two sentences and consequently the main theme of the statement. She also interpreted the identification of the speaker as postmodernist in a way that goes beyond what the text conveys. While a postmodernist view is indeed another paradigm, which may be used somewhat rigidly, the statement does not suggest that the speaker is using it in a way that minimizes ambiguity and establishes structure in her experience. On the contrary, the statement hints that the speaker gravitates towards flexibly adapting to clients’ needs. Finally, this interpretation is also indicative of another repeated tendency. In several of her ratings that were inconsistent with my own, Coder C tended to interpret self-definitions made by speakers as single identifications and thus consistent with a structure-reliant identity configuration. That is, consistent with her own account, she applied at times general laws in cases in which it would be more useful to understand things in context. Thus, self-definitions may be single identifications reflecting the establishment of structure in one’s experience, but they may have other meanings as well. In this example, the speaker seems to refer to postmodernist as a paradigm representing multiple truths and ways of working as opposed to “one-size-fits-all.” Similarly, “empirically-based treatments” can represent different things to different people. Here the speaker understands it as something that dictates a certain way of working that is applied indiscriminately, and she
positions herself in opposition to it. However, “empirically-based treatments” should not be used as a “signpost” for a structure-reliant identity configuration since individuals who rely on such treatments may apply them flexibly. That is, in rating the statement the focus should be on the meaning which the speaker seems to convey rather than imposing the coder’s meaning.

Conclusions. In terms of the theory, the feedback of all three coders and my own observations based on their written rationales suggest that coders could more easily identify between dialectical and non-dialectical identity configurations than among the four configurations, suggesting that the idea of dialectic (i.e., fluidity among identity tasks) is more useful than the concept of the identity configuration.

However, given the substantial reliability scores, it is safe to conclude that the identity configurations are sufficiently distinguishable. In addition, as I observed during analysis, these identity configurations are on a continuum. Most narratives could be classified on both the differentiation and separation levels, occupying different positions on these continuums. That is, most could be represented by two identity configurations.\(^\text{121}\) At different places in the narratives, one voice may become more apparent than another, but overall they are generally intertwined.\(^\text{122}\) Staying with the idea of dialectic (i.e., dialectical versus non-dialectical configurations) and giving up on the distinction between the differentiation and separation processes may create theoretical clarity and coherence, but would also lose some of the complexity. For instance, a narrative may be a combination of open to experience and reactive (this was a relatively common

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\(^{121}\) Identity configurations are not limited to the six end-points, but can be anywhere on the continuum (e.g. “middle reactive,” “low meaning-maker”).

\(^{122}\) I attempted to capture this complexity in the continuous coding. While I tried to choose statements that seemed to represent one identity configuration, I recognize the multiple meanings conveyed by a single statement as well as my failure to recognize other meanings. Indeed, as I mentioned earlier, when I read coders’ rationales as well as during training, I was often persuaded by coders’ perspectives.
combination). This combination suggests that while individuals may more easily manage the dialectic between exploring and committing (i.e., differentiation), they may struggle more at the level of psychological separation. Thus, staying at the level of dialectic alone may be somewhat reductive and less informative.

With regard to training of coders, I wonder if beginning initially with whole interviews, rather than short statements, would be helpful in terms of conveying the notion of understanding things in context. That is, it may sensitize coders to the idea that similar qualities may represent entirely different things in different contexts. It may also allow for a more nuanced understanding of the different identity configurations. In addition, it may be worthwhile to sensitize coders to the ways in which personal biases inevitably impact coding and raise their awareness of particular biases that may become a more systematic issue. Finally, it might be helpful to emphasize more the idea that individuals manifest all identity configurations to varying degrees and thus that we could all potentially make different statements.

**Generalizability – Generalizing to Theory**

Within a constructivist approach, the search for absolute knowledge—for generalizable laws of behavior, characteristic of a positivist paradigm—is replaced by an emphasis on heterogeneity and contextuality of knowledge (Kvale, 1994/1996). Indeed, my goals in pursuing this study were to learn about the identity formation of psychotherapists in training and develop a theoretical framework that can be useful in thinking about this subject and can have practical implications. In addition to developing my constructs, as part of the validation of my findings, I attempted to generalize the findings across the data set. Nevertheless, the focus of my efforts was on the goodness of my concepts rather than on internal generalizability (Maxwell, 2005).
What is more relevant to my study with respect to generalizability is generalizing my findings to theory, as opposed to other populations or settings as in external generalizability. That is, using my sample, I studied the subject of identity formation of psychotherapists in training in depth and I am offering a way of thinking about this subject based on what I have learned. It is suggestive of what *may* happen in other situations. In different settings and circumstances, some aspects of my theory may transfer, whereas others may not. My ideas can be further tested in other situations, elaborated and revised, and in the process acquire greater sophistication and usefulness. They can also be the basis for generating hypotheses that can then be tested in other populations.
CHAPTER VI: DISCUSSION

Goals of Study

The primary goal of this research was to study in depth the question of how psychotherapists in training develop a professional identity. My focus was first on understanding the lived experience of trainees of developing their identity and sense of self as psychotherapists, and second on the generation of a theory that could serve as a useful framework to think about this subject and potentially promote action with regard to the education of future psychotherapists. That is, my aims were both the generation of new ways of understanding and the application of that knowledge to practice. I pursued these objectives by interviewing 29 doctoral students of psychotherapy about their professional development. Analysis included two parts. The most central part was a narrative analysis of the 29 transcribed interviews, resulting in a theoretical framework about the ways in which psychotherapists in training develop their identities as psychotherapists. A second part was an inductive analysis\(^{123}\) of two interview questions: the first focusing on current challenges and concerns trainees experience on their professional journey, and the second on trainees’ evaluation of their training programs. Findings from the inductive analysis and discussion of results are presented in Appendix J.\(^{124}\)

The following discussion will review the main ideas I have developed through the narrative analysis. I will then discuss the theoretical implications of these ideas and potential

\(^{123}\) A modified version of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998a, 1998b).

\(^{124}\) The present study was guided by three research questions (See Conceptual Framework and Research Questions chapter, p. 57). The primary research question was formulated as follows: What are the different ways in which psychotherapist trainees create their professional identities? The analysis of 29 narratives addressed this question. Two additional questions were: What kinds of challenges do psychotherapist trainees face in forming their professional identities? and, What aspects of their training do psychotherapist trainees find most valuable in terms of their professional development and what do they feel is missing from their training? These two questions were addressed in the inductive analysis (Appendix J).
applications to the training of psychotherapists. Finally, I will discuss the study’s limitations and
directions for future research.\footnote{Throughout these discussions I will occasionally refer to the findings from the inductive analysis (presented in Appendix J) in footnotes, as they add to or illuminate different aspects of the ideas discussed.}

\textbf{Narrative Analysis: A Theoretical Framework}

\textit{Review of the Findings}

Identities are created in the tension between the individual and the context in which one
is embedded. Psychotherapist trainees continuously re-create their identities through their
interactions with their training environment, the clients they serve, and the culture at large. These
multiple contexts afford learning opportunities, provide guidance and support, and make
demands. Informed by research and theory I argued in the Literature Review chapter that current
professional and cultural circumstances pose considerable challenges for the identity formation
of psychotherapists in training. Reflecting the trainees’ perspective, the data support my
observations of the multitude and diverse challenges with which trainees cope as they develop
professionally; participants in my sample described dealing with considerable ambiguity and
complexity in psychotherapy work, having to negotiate multiple professional and personal needs,
and struggling to define themselves as they encounter and experiment with multiple perspectives,
ways of working, and professional possibilities.\footnote{As noted, the inductive analysis presents a more systematic investigation of the challenges and concerns participants reported they experience. Briefly, challenges concerning issues of professional development (e.g., becoming a professional, interacting with the psychotherapy field, self-definition) were most commonly reported (19 out of 29 participants reported challenges in this area, 65.5%), followed, but not limited to, by challenges involved in psychotherapy work (13, 44.8%; e.g., the complex and ambiguous nature of the work, limitations of one’s impact, negotiating levels of responsibility and involvement), and training (13, 44.8%; e.g., achieving training milestones, the long and demanding nature of training).}
Working with the narratives I came to view the optimal identity development of psychotherapists in training as one in which the identity that emerges reflects trainees’ abilities and interests and is responsive to the needs of the professional or clinical settings within which trainees are embedded. I conceptualize optimal identity development both in terms of vitality—trainees using their abilities to the fullest and challenging themselves to grow and develop—and in terms of resilience, that is, trainees’ ability to overcome hurdles and deal effectively and flexibly with professional demands. As both trainees and their context continuously change, it follows that so should the identities that are created through the interaction between them.

The theoretical framework I presented conceptualizes the identity formation of psychotherapist trainees in both normative and particular terms, accounting for the commonality across narratives and for the considerable variation among them, respectively. Specifically, the constructs of differentiation-separation and the identity tasks reflect processes and activities in which all trainees engage to some extent; all the narratives in my sample could be understood in terms of these constructs. The differences among trainees, conceptualized in terms of the identity configurations, manifest in the ways in which trainees engage in these processes and tasks, potentially leading to different developmental paths of varying degrees of desirability.

Based on my analysis of the data I suggest that as trainees interact with various professional contexts they continuously re-create their identities through the performance of four identity tasks: exploring, committing, feeling, and reflecting. These tasks, like the identities that are created through them, are inherently interactive; they involve, respectively, 1) the exploration of opportunities for self-identification that the training environment affords, 2) self-definition vis-à-vis others and receptivity to the impact of others, 3) emotional engagement with others, and 4) maintaining observatory distance to learn about self and other.
The identity tasks of exploring and committing operate primarily in the external environment and are in dialectical relationship to one another; each is shaped and defined by the other, creating something new through the movement between them. Based on the narratives of advanced trainees I argue that as trainees seek and experiment with a variety of training experiences while being receptive to the impact of such experiences (i.e., maintain the dialectic between exploring and committing), they come to develop over time a personal therapeutic repertoire that is reflective of their particular professional journey and sets them apart from other psychotherapists. I term this process differentiation.

I conceptualize the tasks of feeling and reflecting as operating more at the internal level, but also in a dialectical relationship, as trainees constantly negotiate different levels of emotional engagement with and distance from others. In moving between immersing in their experience and reflecting on it—which is inherently the act of meaning-making—trainees come to develop a subjective sense of themselves as separated, yet connected to others, having their unique style and presence. I call this process psychological separation.

I view differentiation and psychological separation to be intertwined and dialectical processes, since one shapes and is impacted by the other. When trainees move fluidly between them (i.e., shift flexibly among all four identity tasks), their evolving therapeutic repertoire is placed in a meaningful context and contributes to a subjective sense of uniqueness. Trainees’

\[127\] As I noted in the Analytic Method and Results chapter, exploration in the context of an ability to make commitment is a more active form of exploration in which the receptivity to the influence of others (i.e., making commitments) results in a more deliberate search for opportunities for self-definitions and excitement about discoveries that can potentially impact the self. In contrast, exploration with limited commitments involves more passive exposure and experimentation. Similarly, making commitment in the context of exploration results in continuous change and expansion of commitments as new stimuli are encountered and considered. However, making commitments and limiting exploration result in stability, and in the extreme, rigidity, of commitments.
familiarity with their style and sensibilities in turn informs their experience in the external world, guiding exploration of opportunities and commitments.

As noted, I conceptualize these processes and activities as characterizing all trainees to varying degrees. The variation among trainees manifests in a quality I termed fluidity, referring to the extent to which trainees hold simultaneously or shift among all four identity tasks flexibly in response to changing circumstances. Based on the analysis of advanced trainees, I suggest that fluidity promotes differentiation and psychological separation, resulting over time in vital and resilient identities. In contrast, I argue that consistently limiting one’s engagement in certain tasks (i.e., decreased fluidity) interferes with professional development by compromising differentiation and/or separation. I express this variation in terms of the constructs of identity configurations, which represent different levels of engagement in the four identity tasks; varying levels of fluidly moving among identity tasks. In the Analytic Method and Results chapter I described six identity configurations, which constitute end-points in terms of negotiating the tension between dialectical identity tasks.

![Figure 17. The six end-point identity configurations.](image-url)
Briefly, with respect to differentiation, structure-reliant and the wanderer represent non-dialectical identity configurations, in which there is difficulty maintaining the tension between the identity tasks of exploring and committing. My analysis of narratives of advanced trainees suggests that if these configurations were occupied consistently, differentiation would be compromised in the sense that the developing therapeutic repertoire would be relatively focused in range and inflexible (due to limited exploration and the stability of commitments in the structure-reliant) or would lack substance and depth (due to the limited commitment to ideas, skills, and ways of working in the wanderer). In contrast, open to experience represents a dialectical configuration in which the fluid movement between exploring and committing results in a broad, constantly expanding, and flexible therapeutic repertoire, reflective of trainees’ evolving interests and abilities. The open to experience configuration incorporates within it the structure-reliant and wanderer configurations (including middle-point versions) as temporary approaches that can be flexibly and appropriately occupied in response to particular contextual demands.

With respect to psychological separation, the reactive and analyzer represent non-dialectical configurations in which there is difficulty negotiating emotional engagement and reflection. I argue that if these configurations were occupied consistently over time they would interfere with psychological separation by impeding the development of a sense of self that is separate from others and with which one is familiar and comfortable (due to limited reflection in the reactive), or alternatively with the development of a sense of self that is deeply felt and is connected to others (due to limited emotional engagement in the analyzer). The meaning-maker reflects a dialectical configuration in which the tension between feeling and reflecting is flexibly maintained, leading over time to the development of a subjective sense of self as a
psychotherapist that is knowable, different yet connected to others, and personally meaningful. It represents the ability to fluidly shift among the various identity configurations on the continuum of separation, as varying levels of emotional engagement and reflection are negotiated according to changing circumstances.

I understand fluidity among identity tasks—and the emergent identity configurations—to be the result of the interaction between individual trainees with certain capacities and sensibilities\(^ {128} \) and the context with its particular qualities. Reduced fluidity suggests that trainees’ capacities are overwhelmed by the challenges and demands that the context poses, leading trainees to reduce engagement in certain identity tasks as a way of managing such overload. Accordingly, variation is expected within trainees (as the balance between abilities and demands changes across time and contexts) and among them, with certain trainees having a greater capacity for fluidity than others regardless of the context. Stated in terms of the identity configurations, occupying non-dialectical configurations more consistently reflects reduced ability to respond flexibly to changing circumstances. In contrast, the dialectical configurations represent the ability to shift among different approaches to identity formation as needed. Based on the data, especially the narratives of advanced trainees, I argue that occupying the dialectical identity configurations and flexibly shifting among different identity tasks (and identity configurations) according to changing contexts and circumstances is most desirable in terms of vitality of self and resiliency in dealing with professional demands. In addition, I present my

\(^ {128} \) As I stated in the Literature Review chapter, I view personality as a more encompassing structure than identity, which precedes trainees’ professional identity and influences its formation (See p. 20 for elaboration on the distinctions among identity, self, and personality). Certainly with respect to professional identity, it is my assumption that trainees’ personalities precede and shape the way trainees create their identities as psychotherapists. Specifically, I focus on the impact of personality particularly in terms of trainees’ capacity to engage with (versus minimize or submit to) the ambiguous, multiple, and constantly changing professional and training challenges they encounter. Thus, aspects of personality that are relevant in this respect could include ambiguity tolerance, cognitive flexibility, and emotional regulation.
view that trainees’ awareness of their therapeutic style—strengths, preferences, and limitations—is essential in promoting suitable professional choices in which their abilities and interests match the settings in which they operate, allowing for an interaction in which all parties benefit. This is especially true, I believe, when fluidity is reduced and trainees’ flexibility in coping with challenges and demands of varying nature is more limited.

In what follows I will discuss the theoretical and practical implications of the ideas I presented. Beginning with the first aim of my investigation—gaining a deeper understanding of the identity formation of psychotherapists in training—I will explore these ideas in relation to other research and writing in the areas of identity and psychotherapists’ professional development. That is, the first part will focus on the constructs I have developed based on my analysis of the data. Following my second objective—applying the knowledge gained to training—I will explore the ways in which these ideas could be used in the context of psychotherapy education. This part will focus more on the conclusions I have reached regarding the importance of fluidity and awareness for optimal development. I will follow these two parts with a discussion of the study’s limitations and ideas for future research.

Theoretical Implications of Findings

Diversity of Constructs

The theoretical framework I presented includes different types of constructs. There are processes (differentiation and psychological separation),\textsuperscript{129} discrete categories (the identity tasks

\textsuperscript{129} As I noted in the Analytic Method and Results chapter, I conceive of these processes to be non-linear rather than to represent a continuous, steady progression towards increased differentiation and psychological separation. I believe that throughout their careers psychotherapists continue to have moments of increased sense of psychological separation versus moments when such a sense can collapse. Since differentiation pertains to more concrete qualities such as one’s skills, ideas, ways of working and so on, it may be somewhat more linear. Nevertheless, professional
and fluidity of categories (dialectical movement between differentiation and separation; among identity tasks; and among identity configurations). In addition, as noted previously, while the concepts of the four identity tasks and differentiation-separation represent the commonality across trainees, the construct of the identity configurations reflects the variation among them. This variety of types of constructs demonstrates the complexity of the subject of study, manifested in the richness of participants’ stories. I conceive of these different concepts as tools with which to think about how psychotherapy trainees create their professional identities. These constructs do not define individuals, but rather are ways to organize complex and changing data. At different times and circumstances, certain concepts may prove more relevant than others. For example, when focusing on trainees’ professional development across time, examining processes of differentiation and psychological separation may be more useful. Similarly, one can look at patterns of fluidity among identity configurations over time. In contrast, when the focus is on a current encounter between trainees and the professional context (e.g., supervision, a psychotherapy session, beginning of internship), it might be more helpful to conceptualize the interaction and identify areas deserving attention in terms of the emerging identity configurations (I will elaborate further on this point in discussing implications for training).

**The Dialectical Processes of Differentiation-Separation**

The concepts of differentiation (or individuation) and separation are often discussed in clinical theory and research in the context of a dichotomy between autonomy/independence and connection/dependence. Similarly, many theories of psychological development can be journeys can develop in different ways, including periods of increased exploration and change versus periods of relative steadiness, narrowing of focus, and at times stagnation (Orlinsky & Rønnestad, 2005).
characterized as focusing primarily on separation or attachment issues (See Blatt & Blass, 1990 for a review). For example, Margaret Mahler’s theory of separation-individuation describes this process as a gradual transition from the dependency of infancy to independent functioning (Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1973). While she conceptualizes separation-individuation to happen through interactions with others (i.e., mother, the social world) the focus is on the individual as a self-contained unit striving for independence and separateness, and on the optimal expression of one’s innate capacities. In contrast, developmental theories that focus on attachment seek to understand the individual as developing fundamentally through interactions with others (e.g., Balint, 1949; Bowlby, 1980; Fairbairn, 1952; Guntrip, 1968; Winnicott, 1958). Development is not discussed purely in terms of the maturation of the individual’s internal psychic structures, but measured with respect to relatedness to others. There is emphasis on quality of the relationship and the self’s perception of the other (Blatt & Blass, 1990).

My conception of differentiation and separation is based on maintaining the tension between two dialectical positions—connection and separation; similarity and difference; self and other. Specifically, differentiation, as I conceptualize it, develops out of the back-and-forth movement between the tasks of exploring and committing, both embedded in interactions with others. Similarly, psychological separation involves negotiating the tension between the identity tasks of feeling and reflecting; between connection to others and observation of oneself in relation to others. While these processes suggest a focus on the individual—on the development of a personal professional repertoire and a subjective sense of self as a

130 The identity task of exploring involves exposure to the many opportunities for learning and self-definition that the training environment affords, participation with others, and flexing one’s boundaries to entertain the potential impact of others. The identity task of committing involves setting boundaries around oneself, determining the extent and the nature of the impact of the environment on the self, and defining oneself as similar to and different from others.
psychotherapist—they are embedded in interaction with others, and therefore inherently involve dependence on others. This view is consistent with Blass and Blatt’s (1990) perspective that both separation and attachment are central dimensions of human development and are in a dialectical relationship to one another.

In the area of psychotherapists’ development, summarizing and reformulating the main findings from a cross-sectional and longitudinal qualitative study of the development of 100 counselors and psychotherapists, Rønnestad and Skovholt (2003) conclude that professional development entails an increasingly higher order integration of the professional self and the personal self. Their ideas resonate considerably with my notion of the dialectical processes of differentiation and psychological separation. Specifically, Rønnestad and Skovholt describe two primary ways in which such integration manifests. One is increased consistency between the psychotherapist’s personality and his or her theoretical and conceptual preferences. A second manifestation is that there is selection and formulation of professional roles whereby psychotherapists can decide which techniques and methods to apply and in what way. They use Carl Rogers’s (1957) concept of congruence to describe this process at its optimal expression, in which experiences are consistent with the professional self-concept. They also refer to a change from a level in which experiences are not conceptualized to a level of integration of experiences and generalization. I similarly suggest that a fluid movement between the processes of differentiation and separation over time results in the development of a therapeutic repertoire that

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131 A I noted in the Literature Review chapter, in this very comprehensive paper, Rønnestad and Skovholt (2003), two of the leading researchers in the area of psychotherapists’ development, summarize an over decade-long longitudinal investigation, presenting a phase model as well as 14 themes of psychotherapist/counselor development. It is an incredibly rich, extensive, and informative paper that includes many ideas that relate to my own thinking. Accordingly, in order to cover in this discussion a variety of points of view, I attempted to contain my excitement and touch on but a few of the many points of convergence. Nevertheless, the following discussion does contain several references to this paper.
is reflective of trainees’ abilities, embedded in a developed subjective sense of oneself, and allows trainees to make professional choices that suit them. Whereas I delineate two distinct processes for purposes of theoretical clarity, Rønnestad and Skovholt’s integration process emphasizes the intertwined and interdependent nature of these processes, which I conceive in terms of a dialectical relationship between them. Rønnestad and Skovholt further describe two reciprocal movements that occur in parallel to this process of integration, which my idea of psychological separation closely resembles. Specifically, they state that as psychotherapists increasingly integrate personal and professional aspects of themselves, they are more able to differentiate between themselves and their clients, and between their respective contributions and responsibilities, at the same time connecting more to clients.

Identity Configurations – Between Self and Context

In describing the different identity configurations I have identified in the data, I conceptualized them as temporary approaches to identity formation that trainees may occupy in response to varying contexts. In addition, based on narratives of advanced trainees, I speculated about the form professional development may take when these configurations were occupied more consistently. The reference to temporary versus more enduring approaches to identity formation brings to mind the two originally competing “trait versus state” perspectives on personality. Specifically, “trait models” seek to account for behavior in terms of consistent “patterns of thoughts, feelings, or actions that distinguish people from one another” (Johnson, 1997, p. 74). That is, they focus on individual differences and consistency of behavior across situations and time. In contrast, “state models” understand behavior as dependent on exigencies of the environment and explain consistencies as an artifact of individuals being in similar situations. Rather than identifying stable characteristics of persons, the focus is on identifying
stable stimulus-response laws (Johnson, 1997). Several decades ago, when pursued separately, these two perspectives represented the abandonment of the attempt to understand the person as a whole, either by deconstructing the personality or by doing without it altogether (McAdams, 1997). This debate began to subside in the 1980s as more and more psychologists, despite major differences in emphasis, came to see behavior as a function of both traits (or internal dispositions in general) and situations, with a growing focus on the interaction between the individual and the environment (Hamaker, Nesselroade, & Molenaar, 2007; Kenrick & Funder, 1988; McAdams, 1997).

My constructs of identity configurations are consistent with more integrative approaches to personality, which focus on the interactions of enduring personal characteristics with situational factors. Specifically, I conceptualize the various identity configurations as emerging out of the interactions between individuals with certain capacities (i.e., traits) and the context with its particular demands and challenges (i.e., states). More specifically, the identity configurations represent trainees’ different responses to the context and thus cannot be understood primarily in terms of internal disposition or situational terms. Closely related to integrative approaches are contemporary trait researchers, who view traits in much more complex and dynamic terms than early approaches, looking at how people choose situations and evoke responses in other people (Wiggins, 1997). Accordingly, consistency of behaviors across situations can be understood to reflect the rigidity rather than the primacy of traits.

Taken together, the trait-state debate can be potentially reformulated to reflect rigidity versus flexibility of self-other interactions. Stated differently, the explanatory frameworks that ‘pure’ trait and state models propose can be thought to apply to those more extreme situations in

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132 This ideological battle reached its peak at the end of the 1960s (McAdams, 1997).
which there is breakdown of mutual interaction between self and environment. Specifically, situations in which contextual circumstances are so overpowering that they diminish individual differences may appear consistent with pure state models. Alternatively, individuals who cannot flexibly adapt to changing circumstances, rigidly presenting with the same attributes across situations, appear to support pure trait models.\footnote{Of course, integrative or contemporary trait models, by focusing on the interplay between traits and states, account for these situations in which situational circumstances or internal disposition take primacy. They undoubtedly offer a more complex explanatory framework.} I express this idea of traits’ rigidity in my framework in terms of the non-dialectical configurations. As temporary positions, the non-dialectical configurations represent a (potentially appropriate) way to manage overwhelming contextual challenges. When occupied more consistently, across time and contexts, they represent reduced ability to respond flexibly to changing demands. In contrast, the dialectical identity configurations are consistent with integrative models, or more dynamic trait models, in which there is mutual and constantly changing influence between self and context. My conclusion that fluidity among identity configurations is desirable for both the individual and the context seems to apply to the field of personality psychology which, as McAdams (1997) and Kenrick and Funder (1998) argue, had been impeded by the state-trait controversy and regained its vitality with the integration of the two perspectives.

In the area of identity, Côté and Schwartz (2002) espouse an integrative approach to identity formation, proposing a model that combines psychological and sociological understandings of identity. My ideas about dialectical and non-dialectical identities, created in response to contextual challenges and demands, share considerable similarity with their model. Specifically, taking a sociological perspective, Côté and Schwartz describe the cultural context in which individuals develop their identities, arguing that global economic and political changes
have reduced collective support for identity formation, leaving individuals largely on their own to develop identities at a time when socially prescribed roles are much more ambiguous. At the psychological level, they suggest that given these social conditions, the individual’s resources become important, especially those psychological resources that can facilitate interactions with various social structures and developmental contexts.

Focusing on agency in identity formation, Côté and Schwartz (2002) outline two trajectories for identity formation—developmental individualization and default individualization—that are distinguished in terms of the quality and nature of the individual’s interaction with the social environment. Developmental individualization represents an active and deliberate search for identity options and growth opportunities that resonate with the self (i.e., exploration and commitment). Identity opportunities are carefully evaluated for their potential for furthering self-development and self-growth (i.e., reflection). This trajectory involves a bi-directional and purposeful interaction with the environment, in which the individual is an active and engaged participant (i.e., emotional engagement). The lack of structure in late-modern society can be experienced as an opportunity to form a unique and self-directed sense of identity. Resembling this trajectory is my idea of fluid movement among all four identity tasks as manifested in the combination of open to experience and meaning-maker configurations. In contrast, default individualization represents an other-directed stance in which identity options are selected more passively, and external influences are internalized without

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134 They distinguish between tangible resources, such as financial status and educational credentials, and intangible ones, referring to personality attributes such as ego strength and critical thinking. While tangible resources, such as financial means, can certainly ease or alternatively challenge trainees’ capacity to deal with professional and training demands, my focus when I refer to trainees’ personal abilities is on characteristics that are more consistent with the intangible resources, such as ambiguity tolerance, reflective capacities, and adaptation to change.
much effort or consideration. The passive reception to contextual influences minimizes the bidirectional nature of the individual-context interaction. The non-dialectical configurations in my framework that suggest limited exploration, emotional engagement, and reflection resemble this trajectory.

Reviewing these two trajectories, Schwartz (2002) notes that the primary difference between them lies in the individual’s intrapsychic response to and interplay with the environment. He postulates the outcomes of the two trajectories in individual and societal terms. Specifically, in developmental individualization, individuals take advantage of societal resources as they develop and revise their identities, leading to personal growth. When aggregated across individuals, this trajectory, which involves personal agency, serves to enact social change. In contrast, in default individualization, little attention is given to the ways in which identity choices might affect self-development or quality of life. On a macro level, such lack of agency diminishes social evolution. Similarly, though with a much narrower focus, I define psychotherapist trainees’ optimal development in individual and environmental terms, suggesting that fluidity among identity tasks, which is consistent with developmental individualization trajectory, over time benefits both the individual trainee and the professional context.  

In the area of psychotherapists’ development, Skovholt and Rønnestad (2003a) too suggest the desirability of fluidity in response to contextual circumstances. They describe three therapeutic styles with respect to challenges encountered in psychotherapy that are reminiscent of the identity configurations I presented at the level of psychological separation (i.e., reactive,  

135 My focus in terms of the environment is indeed narrower, as I suggest that fluidity promotes trainees’ resiliency in meeting professional demands and thus benefits the clinical setting in which they work and the populations they serve. Nevertheless, aggregated over individuals, this could theoretically amount to an impact at the societal level as well.
analyzer, and meaning-maker). Drawing on research on early human development, they conceptualize psychotherapists’ professional development as “a self-other differentiation process” (p. 48). They state that to function optimally psychotherapists need to differentiate between their responsibilities and those of their clients and to “experience, understand, regulate, and express emotions at a level that facilitates the counseling/therapy process” (p. 48). Specifically, they identify three styles of reacting to the intense data that psychotherapy work involves: premature closure, insufficient closure, and functional closure. *Premature closure* refers to a state of being overwhelmed by professional challenges and defending against it by avoiding emotional engagement. That is, in terms of my constructs, this style is similar to limiting engagement in the task of feeling as expressed in the identity configuration of the analyzer. In the analyzer, psychological separation is impeded in the sense that trainees are not connected to others. *Insufficient closure* refers to an inability to stop processing incoming data, continually thinking about the client’s problems or one’s reactions to it. It manifests in inadequate regulation of professional boundaries. My notion of emphasizing the task of feeling and limiting of reflection as is evident in the reactive identity configuration is consistent with this style. The reactive configuration reflects the struggle to maintain sufficient observatory distance and as a result the possibility of being overwhelmed by one’s emotional experience. Finally, *functional closure* refers to the ability to attend to the rich data psychotherapy involves and process it in a way that does not prevent the psychotherapist from emotional engagement due to endless reflection. This style resonates with my conception of maintaining the dialectic between emotional engagement and reflection that is the hallmark of psychological separation (embodied in the meaning-maker identity configuration). Skovholt and Ronnestad (2003a) speak about the “cycle of caring”—moving between “emphatic attachment,” “active involvement,” and “felt
separation” repeatedly (p. 49). My notion of shifting fluidly between feeling and reflecting, as represented by the dialectical identity of the meaning-maker, is strikingly similar. Skovholt and Rønnestad state that the “cycle of caring” is a very difficult thing for novice psychotherapists to do. I agree that the capacity to negotiate these various ways of being with clients (represented in my framework by the identity tasks of feeling and reflecting) develops with experience. I also view it to be an inherent and essential part of psychotherapy work, since times in which the capacity to maintain this tension breaks down are meaningful and can be used to further the work (Bromberg, 2008; Stern, 2010). That being said, it is also my view that novice trainees differ in their initial capacity to negotiate between emotional engagement and reflection beyond level of experience.

Consistency/Singularity versus Fluidity/Multiplicity

In the Conceptual Framework and Research Questions chapter, I defined “self” and “identity” as the way people organize (i.e., interpret) their experience and make meanings as they move through time and contexts. I suggested that from this definition of identity and self follows a notion of multiple identities/selves. I also recognized that individuals experience a subjective sense of continuity across different versions of identity. I used the examples of different therapeutic identities that trainees may assume, such as the “clinic psychotherapist” or the “writer psychotherapist,” to express my view that such multiple self-definitions can co-exist along with a more continuous sense of oneself as a psychotherapist. This idea of multiple identities touches on the content aspect of identity (Marcia, 1993)—the different ways trainees organize their experience into particular versions of identity. This idea is expressed in my theory

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136 Rønnestad in a personal communication shared his view that there are individuals who are more suited to psychotherapy work than others and that while training can develop such skills, it is limited. For instance, we discussed the capacity for empathy, which can be taught and developed, yet only to a certain extent.
in the multiple and constantly changing commitments and meanings (i.e., multiplicity) that characterize the dialectical configurations versus the stable and consistent commitments/meanings (i.e., singularity) that characterize the non-dialectical configurations.

Though my theoretical framework does refer to the content of identities (i.e., the specific commitments and meanings that trainees make), the focus of my inquiry is on trainees’ \textit{approach} to identity formation (i.e., process). While there can be movement among different approaches to identity formation (i.e., different identity configurations), there is still a continuous “I”—the participant who tells his or her story of professional development—who organizes experience in different ways in response to changing demands and circumstances.\footnote{An example of the difference between the content and process aspects of identity would be the specific treatment modalities trainees adopt (i.e., content) versus the way they go about developing their theoretical orientation (e.g., primary identification/limited exploration versus multiple identifications/active exploration). Thus, with respect to multiplicity and continuity, in terms of content, a trainee can have multiple theoretical identities (e.g., CBT, psychodynamic, family-systems) along with a continuous sense as a psychotherapist. In terms of process, a trainee can take different approaches to identity formation in different contexts; he or she can limit exploration when learning in a particular setting a specific treatment model that requires commitment and immersion, and can be more exploratory and integrative in a different setting, where the use of multiple treatment approaches can be used. This trainee would still have a continuous sense of an active “I” who organizes experience differently in different contexts and who can potentially reflect on these differences.} I wonder if trainees who tend to occupy the dialectical identity configurations more often can more easily maintain continuity across discontinuities than trainees who more consistently occupy the non-dialectical identity configurations.\footnote{A related hypothesis I have is that trainees who more consistently occupy non-dialectical identity configurations would under certain circumstances shift between opposite non-dialectical approaches—between reactive (limiting reflecting) and analyzer (limiting feeling), and between structure-reliant (limiting exploring) and wanderer (limiting committing). An example would be shifting from the reactive configuration to the analyzer—limiting emotional engagement—in response to emotional overload (i.e., similar to a defense of intellectualization). In other words, I wonder if more than the specific tendency towards one identity task or another, the underlying issue is the difficulty negotiating several identity tasks simultaneously. There were some indications in the data for such reversal of approaches; however, this remains a hypothesis to be tested in future research.} Following this line of thought, fluidity (i.e., dialectical identity configurations) would represent the ability to maintain the continuity of the process of identity formation while moving among different identity tasks and configurations. In contrast, decreased fluidity (i.e., non-dialectical identities) would suggest maintaining a sense of continuity by...
occupying a single approach or perhaps by shifting between non-dialectical identities without a sense of continuity across the different versions.\footnote{This hypothesis is closely related to the idea of dissociation and the inability to “stand in the spaces” of different self-experiences (Bromberg, 1998). With respect to identity it would mean that trainees would not recognize other versions of identity while occupying another.}

Summarizing their findings from extensive interviews with psychotherapists at different developmental stages (from training to seniority), Rønnestad and Skovholt (2003) touch on the tension between discontinuity and continuity in psychotherapists’ professional development. They conclude that while professional development is generally experienced by psychotherapists as a continual process of growing confidence and mastery, it is not a linear process and can be erratic. During one’s career, periods of lack of confidence in one’s ability may emerge repeatedly as new challenges are encountered. They state: “Development may be conceptualized as repeated cycles of enthusiasm/experienced hardship, self-doubt, anxiety, dejection, exploration/processing (new learning), and integration (mastery)” (p. 32). My idea of occupying various identity configurations in response to contextual challenges is consistent with this portrayal.\footnote{Rønnestad and Skovholt’s (2003) descriptions of self-confidence versus self-doubt are reminiscent of my idea of shifts at the level of psychological separation (i.e., reactive versus meaning-maker configurations). Similarly, cycling between dejection and exploration and integration is evocative of the level of differentiation (i.e., wanderer versus open to experience configurations).} Rønnestad and Skovholt suggest that these cycles are a natural, and desirable, aspect of development, allowing for growth as obstacles are overcome. My more speculative suggestion that fluidity among identity configurations over time promotes trainees’ development, leading to increased differentiation and psychological separation, is consistent with this view.

\textit{In Dialogue with Identity Theories}

As noted before, my focus in terms of identity formation is a relatively narrow one, looking at a specific domain of identity (i.e., professional) in a specific population (i.e.,
psychotherapists) at a particular developmental stage (i.e., training). Nevertheless, I view the professional and personal selves of psychotherapists as interrelated, some would say optimally integrated (Skovholt & Jennings, 2004; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003a). Accordingly, my thinking about psychotherapists’ development has tended to be broad in nature, looking to general models of identity formation rather than more focused models of professional development. In addition, it should be noted that the application of the theoretical framework I have developed may not be limited to the specific population under study (i.e., psychotherapist trainees in doctoral programs). For example, the sample could also be thought to represent individuals who are at a developmental stage of deep involvement in their careers with all the challenges and implications to identity that such a phase in life involves. Thus, the presented ideas may be relevant to other helping professions or to other types of psychotherapy programs (e.g., Master programs).

In what follows, I will explore my ideas in the context of other identity models with the awareness that I am touching on a more specific domain of identity. I will refer to certain aspects of Erikson’s identity theory (1968, 1980) and to Marcia’s Identity Status model (1993, 2002), both of which were included in the Literature Review chapter. I will also discuss Berzonsky’s Identity Style model (1989, 1992).

Erik Erikson versus Contemporary Conceptions of Identity

Erikson’s identity theory is considerably comprehensive and complex, touching on intrapsychic, interpersonal, and social aspects of identity. For purposes of brevity I will focus on the issue of sameness (consistency) and continuity, versus fluidity (inconsistency) and

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141 The theoretical framework could possibly be relevant to professions beyond the helping professions. However, given the centrality of reflection in the theory, it is more likely that these ideas as presented would be more applicable to professions in which reflection is an important part of the trade (e.g., artistic professions).
discontinuity of identity, which occupies an important role in Erikson’s theory and in mine. Underlying Erikson’s investigation of the subject of identity is the question of how individuals develop and maintain a sense of personal sameness and continuity required for healthy functioning (Erikson, 1968, 1980). On first look, this suggests a fundamental difference between our conceptualizations. Whereas Erikson emphasized sameness, I see the fluidity of identity (of psychotherapist trainees) as its most resilient aspect. This difference between Erikson’s and my theory can be at least partly attributed to the different time periods in which they are embedded. While Erikson’s theory can be thought to reflect a modern sensibility, I see my theory as more consistent with postmodern conceptions of identity (Gergen, 1991; Honneth, 1992; Lifton, 1999), as discussed in the Literature Review chapter.

Schachter (2005) suggests that Erikson’s theory, despite its apparent emphasis on sameness and continuity, is open to a more contemporary reading and can potentially transcend the historical time in which it was written to meet the challenges of the postmodern. The key to “opening” Erikson’s ideas, according to Schachter, is in the embeddedness of his identity concepts in context.

For Erikson, the main issue in forming a stable identity lies in the interplay between the intrapsychic and the social (Erikson, 1968). The formation of a firm ego identity is based on role validation and community integration and is therefore promoted by a lack of ambiguity regarding cultural beliefs. In contrast, unstable community relations can pose difficulties in the attempt to form a viable adult identity. In accordance with the changing society, Erikson (1968) described the process of identity formation as “always changing and developing: at its best it is a process of increased differentiation” (p. 23). He saw identity as lying on a continuum between the poles of identity confusion (i.e., failure to form an identity) and identity synthesis (i.e., integration).
According to Erikson, the severity of identity confusion was dependent primarily on the culture’s ability to provide guidance in mastering the task at hand and could range from relatively normative responses, such as observed in prolonged moratoria, to severe pathologies. He saw identity problems of adulthood as “normal” responses to the hardships and alienation associated with modern technological societies. Accordingly, in reviewing various concepts in Erikson’s theory Schachter (2005) proposes that, depending on the particular cultural context in which identity is created, different identities structures may be desirable (For a further elaboration of Schachter’s ideas please see Appendix D).¹⁴² This reading of Erikson suggests that in our time, one marked by lack of structure and clear norms (Dunn, 1998; Lifton, 1999), difficulty developing a consistent identity would be normative. Applied to the context of psychotherapist trainees, given the considerable ambiguity and the multiple and constantly changing demands with which trainees cope in psychotherapy work and in training, inconsistent or multiple identities may be considered by this rationale to be an expected, even if not desirable, response.

Supporting this postmodern interpretation is the work of Erikson’s recent biographer, Lawrence Friedman (2004), who notes that “Erikson’s examples of firm ego identity were rebels who connected constructively with the other part in themselves and in their society to promote radical new opportunities for humanity” (p. 37). Describing Erikson himself, Friedman writes of his “always-changing complexity… [He was] a constant border crosser who was always in process and very difficult to pin down… and had no fixed professional identity” (p. 25-35). If one accepts the notion that a theorist’s personality is manifested in his or her theory, then Erikson’s theory may suggest more fluidity of identity than it seems on first reading.

¹⁴² Schachter (2005) touches on both the aspects of content and process with respect to identity. In Appendix D I describe three processes for identity formation that he identifies in Erikson’s writing, which Schachter argues can be used to construct both coherent and incoherent structures of identity.
Marcia: The Identity Status Model

Based on interviews with college students, James Marcia (1966) constructed a typology of identity statuses intended to represent Erikson’s theory (See Literature Review chapter for elaboration, p. 29). Focusing on personal identity\(^{143}\) and on the assumedly independent dimensions of exploration and commitment, through cross tabulation of high and low levels of each, Marcia created a system of four independent identity statuses: identity diffusion (low exploration, low commitment), identity foreclosure (low exploration, high commitment), identity moratorium (high exploration, low commitment), and identity achievement (high exploration, high commitment). The centrality of the processes of exploration and commitment in Marcia’s theory and the creation of four identity statuses based on different interrelations between these processes place my ideas in close theoretical proximity to his, with interesting commonalities and differences. One important difference, which impacts all aspects of our respective theories, is the different look we take at the process of identity formation. Whereas Marcia is informed by Erikson’s (1964) developmental theory and focuses on large-scale developmental processes across the life span, my focus is on psychotherapists’ training period and on the identities that emerge in daily interactions. In what follows I will explore different aspects of my theoretical framework that relate to Marcia’s complex and well-researched theory.

\(^{143}\)Erikson(1980) postulated three levels of identity. Ego identity is the personality agency that is responsible for behavioral, cognitive, and emotional control. It includes one’s basic beliefs about oneself that would be private or unconscious. At the intersection between self and context, personal identity refers to the set of ideals, beliefs, and goals that one shows to the world. It includes aspects of self that differentiate the individual from other people, such as career choices and romantic preferences. At the most contextually oriented level, social identity represents a sense of inner solidarity with a group’s ideals—a consolidation of elements that one integrates into the sense of self from groups to which one belongs.
Marcia’s dimensions of exploration and commitment. There are no corresponding concepts in Marcia’s theory to my identity tasks of feeling and reflecting. However, in referring to Erikson’s notion of identity synthesis, Marcia does mention a “missing ingredient,” which is the “synthesis of the elements that make up the commitments” (Marcia, 2001, p. 63). He states that the process by which such synthesis happens is not available for direct inquiry\textsuperscript{144} and that it is only possible to measure the end result and determine whether such a synthesis took place. I wonder if my constructs of the identity tasks of feeling and reflecting through which trainees come to make meaning of their experience and embed their commitments in a knowable and emotionally resonant sense of themselves as psychotherapists touch on the “missing ingredient” Marcia alludes to (and on Erikson’s [1968] notion of identity synthesis).

In comparing my identity configurations to Marcia’s identity statuses, a fundamental difference emerges owing to the different ways in which we arrive at these constructs. Specifically, Marcia views exploration and commitment as independent dimensions and, as noted, created the four statuses based on cross tabulation of low and high levels of these dimensions. In contrast, I view the identity tasks of exploring and committing as existing in dialectical tension to one another—one is defined and shaped by the other. Rather than low and high levels of each, my focus is on the balance between them. When fluidity is reduced and engagement in one task is limited, it changes the way in which the other task is performed. Specifically, committing in the context of reduced exploration is limited, taking in influences that are consistent with existing commitments and thereby maintaining consistency. Similarly, exploration with limited receptivity to encountered stimuli and experiences suggests a more passive exploration that lacks deliberateness and excitement. These differences in

\textsuperscript{144} Marcia (2001) states that Erikson described this synthesis process as “silent with good reason” (p. 63).
conceptualization of exploration and commitment translate into differences between Marcia’s statuses and my configurations.

Specifically, the identity configuration of structure-reliant—in which, when occupied consistently, limited exploration results in stable and consistent commitments—closely resembles Marcia’s foreclosure status, in which individuals settle on identity with little exploration. This is where Marcia’s conceptualization and my own thinking are most consistent. Marcia’s diffused status, in which both commitment and exploration are low, suggests a failure to develop identity; the wanderer identity configuration in my framework, in which the task of committing is limited, is most closely related. There is no identity configuration in my theory that directly parallels Marcia’s moratorium (high exploration, low commitment) or achievement (high exploration, high commitment) statuses as distinct approaches to identity formation. However, the dialectical configuration of open to experience can be seen to reflect a fluid movement between these two statuses. Specifically, the moratorium closely resembles the identity task of exploration in my theory, in which individuals are open to various influences without a strong need to make stable commitments. The achievement status represents the ability to make commitments following a period of exploration and in that sense is closely related to the task of committing (when done in the context of active exploration) in my framework. Marcia’s (2002) writing on the process of identity formation supports this conceptualization. He states that

145 The wanderer configuration is different from the moratorium because it represents a much more passive exploration and, when occupied consistently, a failure to consolidate a way of working and sense of self as a psychotherapist. Moratorium reflects active exploration of various alternatives and usually precedes commitment (the status of achievement).

146 Although Marcia’s achievement status involves high exploration and high commitment and thus seems to be closely related to the open to experience configuration (which represents fluid movement among exploration and commitment), it is conceptualized somewhat differently. Specifically, the achievement status suggests an outcome—achievement—and commitment is established following a period of exploration. In that sense it is a relatively static status. Change in Marcia’s framework is conceptualized as movement among statuses. In contrast, the identity configuration of the open to experience embodies movement within it and thus is better captured by a movement between Marcia’s moratorium and achievement statuses.
following the initial identity formed in adolescence through an act of construction (i.e.,
achievement status), subsequent identity development involves disequilibration of previous
identity structures. Normative, expected disequilibrating events are those associated with
Erikson’s life cycle stages. In addition, personally disequilibrating events (e.g., divorce, job
promotion, spiritual crisis, loss of loved ones) can also lead to reformulation of one’s identity.
Marcia conceives of changes in identity in terms of Moratorium-Achievement-Moratorium-
Achievement (MAMA) cycles during significant disequilibrating events. During these cycles
individuals may regress to earlier identity statuses. Such regression has the purpose of allowing
the deconstruction of previous identity structure and the formulation of a new one.

While Marcia and I seem to conceive of change in identity in similar terms (i.e.,
movement between moratorium and achievement statuses; between the identity tasks of
exploring and committing, respectively), as I noted earlier, there is an important difference in our
conceptualizations with respect to the kind of lenses we turn on the process of identity formation.
Specifically, Marcia takes a much broader look at the process of identity formation, examining
change with respect to significant life events and developmental stages across the life span.
While he sees the reformulated identity as continuous with the previous one and thinks of change
as more often a gradual evolution of previous forms than a transformation, for Marcia, once such
a change occurred, an individual can occupy the status of achievement for several years. In
contrast, the focus of my inquiry is narrower (i.e., professional identity of psychotherapists in

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147 At each stage identity is reformulated as the individual responds to the rewards and demands of that
developmental phase. There are specific desirable outcomes at each developmental stage.

148 This similarity is limited to my conceptualization of change in terms of the process of differentiation. In my
theory I also refer to change in terms of the process of psychological separation and the fluid movement between the
levels of differentiation and separation.

149 Marcia (2001) gives the example of a woman who achieved an identity as a late adolescent, then later in life,
after fulfilling many of the expected social roles like motherhood and job competence, began to question her
occupational commitment and interpersonal beliefs, thereby occupying the moratorium status.
training), emphasizing a closer examination of the process of identity formation. I conceptualize identity configurations as created in response to contextual challenges and demands, which can range from small-scale daily events to significant destabilizing events that take place during the period of training. While my ideas can be applied to changes in professional identity across developmental stages that trainees undergo, given my focus on training, my interest is in changes in identity formation that can happen in the course of a supervision hour, a day or a semester.

**Self-context interaction.** For Marcia movement among the identity statuses depends on the environment—the opportunities it affords and the affirmation or discouragement of individuals’ attempts to form an identity it provides (Marcia, 2002). For example, depending on the reactions of the environment to their exploration attempts, moratorium individuals are expected to advance to achievement status (under favorable conditions) or regress to foreclosure or diffused statuses (e.g., within a punitive or discouraging environment). In addition, Marcia states that the identity statuses can only be understood in context. Thus, initial moratorium is different than moratorium that happens after an individual had already been in an achievement status. Similarly, achievement status later in life is different than the initial one. My notion of fluidity among identity configurations as being a function of both the individual and the context is consistent with this aspect of Marcia’s theory. For example, in my framework, occupying the structure-reliant configuration temporarily (in response to particular circumstances) in the context of general fluidity is different than doing so as a more rigid approach to identity configuration.  

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150 Immersing oneself in a theoretical model and limiting exploration for a short period of time can be a positive choice when it happens in the context of a generally explorative orientation. That is, it is a way of occupying a configuration in a manner that takes the context and circumstances into account, rather than defending against challenges.
In summary, Marcia’s theory and my ideas share similarities alongside important differences. The commonalities in our thinking can be attributed to the central role that exploration and commitment occupy in our theories. Differences emanate primarily from the different lenses we use to examine identity; Marcia’s theory takes a much broader look at the process of identity formation, whereas I look at psychotherapists’ professional identity during the training period. We also differ in the nature of our constructs of exploration and commitment (i.e. independent dimensions in Marcia’s framework; dialectical tasks in mine).

_Bezonsky: The Identity Style Model_

Examining the different qualities that research findings suggest are associated with Marcia’s four statuses, Berzonsky (1989) proposes that the identity statuses may reflect or are associated with differences in the ways in which individuals process self-relevant information, make decisions, and solve problems. Berzonsky describes his model as a process model of personal identity, adding a dynamic dimension to Marcia’s more static, outcome constructs (Berzonsky & Adams, 1999). In addition, whereas Marcia’s focus is on the actions individuals have taken in the past, Berzonsky’s focus is on present daily interactions (Schwartz, 2001). That is, Berzonsky’s model and my framework both take a closer (rather than broader) look at the process (rather than outcome) of identity formation.

Berzonsky describes three “processing orientations” (1992, p. 772): informational, normative, and diffuse/avoidant. In the informational style individuals actively seek out, use and elaborate self-relevant information as they make decisions concerning their identities and solve problems. Incongruent information leads to revision and accommodation of previous self-constructions. This style most clearly brings to mind my construct of the open to experience

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151 Berzonsky developed a self-report measure, the Identity Style Inventory, of these three styles (Berzonsky, 1989).
configuration, which is characterized by active exploration and continuous change and expansion of commitments, leading over time to a unique therapeutic repertoire. Indeed, Berzonsky describes the information style in terms of increased differentiation: “…deliberate use of this orientation should promote the formation of a coherently integrated self-theory which is complex and differentiated” (p. 772). Further providing support to the parallel between the open to experience and the informational style are the links we both make between these approaches and Marcia’s moratorium and achievement individuals (Berzonsky, 1989). While Berzonsky’s focus seems to be on experience in the external world (i.e., emphasizing effectiveness and problem solving), his definition is somewhat vague, allowing it to extend to inner experience as well. Accordingly, the informational style can be thought to be associated with the meaning-maker as well, which is characterized by active inner exploration and continued expansion and revision of self-understanding. Supporting this interpretation of Berzonsky’s informational style are research findings associating this style with self-reflection and awareness of internal states (Berzonsky & Sullivan, 1992). In other words, the informational style, if interpreted broadly, can be thought to parallel my notion of a dialectical identity and more generally of fluidity of identity.

Berzonsky (1992) conceptualizes the normative style as consistent with Marcia’s foreclosure status. He states that the focus of this style is on meeting the expectations of others and on maintaining existing self-constructions. The normative style is associated with a tendency to limit receptivity to new information that has relevance to important areas of the self, such as

152 In the previous section in which I discussed Marcia’s constructs, I conceptualized the open to experience configuration as reflecting a fluid movement between the moratorium and achievement statuses.

153 Given my focus on professional development of psychotherapists, the distinction between differentiation (i.e., adoption of skills, knowledge, and professional identifications) and separation (i.e., development of a sense of oneself as a psychotherapist) makes sense. However, Berzonsky’s (1989) focus is on Marcia’s model and an extension of Erikson’s personal identity in which the external and internal levels are intertwined.
value and belief systems. It is also associated with low ambiguity tolerance, leading to immediate commitment making (Berzonsky & Sullivan, 1992). This style brings to mind the combination of the reactive and structure-reliant identity configurations in which individuals seek to maintain similarity to others and limit exposure to new and potentially conflicting information, thereby maintaining the consistency of self-understanding and professional identifications. As Berzonsky (1992) states, “Normative individuals will defend against and distort information and experiences that may invalidate internalized prescriptions: a rigidly organized self-structure with limited differentiation will result” (p. 772).

Finally, Berzonsky’s (1992) diffuse/avoidant style represents the tendency to procrastinate and delay decisions. It is an emotion-focused coping strategy in which decisions are guided by hedonistic motivations and situational circumstances. It is associated with low levels of commitment and unstable self-conceptions (Berzonsky & Neimeyer, 1988). While there is exploration involved, it is disorganized and haphazard. This style results in a loosely integrated identity structure, which Berzonsky (1992) associates with Marcia’s (1980) diffuse status. The wanderer configuration in my framework, which represents difficulty consolidating a therapeutic repertoire that has substance and depth due to limited commitment making, closely resembles Berzonsky and Marcia’s constructs. The focus on emotions and situational circumstances in directing decision-making in Berzonsky’s diffuse/avoidant style is also reminiscent of the reactive configuration in which decisions and actions are guided by immediate emotional experience and there is difficulty tolerating difference from others. The latter often manifests in avoidance of setting boundaries around the self (i.e., defining the self as different

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154 As noted previously, the wanderer configuration is mostly a theoretical configuration, derived based on theorizing and discrete manifestations in the sample of what seemed to be participants’ avoidance of making commitments and drawing boundaries around the self. Accordingly, it is a configuration on which I did not elaborate greatly.
from others), consistent with the low commitment in Berzonsky’s identity style. Supporting this possible association between the diffuse/avoidant style and the reactive is that the former has been found to be negatively associated with introspectiveness (Berzonsky, 1992).  

Complicating the picture further, the diffuse/avoidant style was also found to be related to emotional distancing (Berzonsky, 1992), suggesting similarity to the analyzer identity configuration in which the task of feeling is limited. The reactive and analyzer configurations share the difficulty of negotiating the tension between feeling and reflecting, limiting one task as a way to regulate internal demands. In the reactive, because of the reliance on emotional reaction and the decreased observatory distance, trainees are susceptible to becoming overwhelmed by their feelings. It is possible that at those moments, trainees would shift to the analyzer configuration to disengage emotionally and reduce internal pressure. This idea suggests again that the underlying quality of decreased fluidity (rather than the specific task that is limited/emphasized) is the crucial matter. Accordingly, the diffuse/avoidant style can be understood to capture this vacillation between the two non-dialectical modes.

Taken together, it appears that the similarities between Berzonsky’s identity styles and my configurations can be best conceptualized in terms of the notion of fluidity/movement (rather than linking them to specific identity configurations), with the informational relating to dialectical identity configurations and the normative and diffuse/avoidant relating to non-dialectical identity configurations. Supporting this proposition is Berzonsky’s (1992) notion of what is a desirable identity style. He judges the effectiveness of identity in pragmatic terms—its

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155 The reactive configuration represents reduced fluidity between the identity tasks of feeling and reflecting, emphasizing the former and limiting the latter.

156 I discussed this hypothesis earlier in a footnote in my discussion of multiplicity and continuity of identity (See footnote 135, p. 272).
ability to enable individuals to cope successfully with daily challenges and problems. Similarly, I view the resiliency of trainees’ identities as manifested in their ability to cope effectively with various and changing professional and training demands. Indeed, in discussing this issue Berzonsky (1992) refers to the ability to change one’s identity in response to changing circumstances as a desirable quality: “As contextual demands change and new situations are encountered, continued personal effectiveness will depend on the way in which the identity structure or self-theory is revised or conserved” (p. 771). Accordingly, Berzonsky (1989) sees the informational style, which I associate with the dialectical configurations, as most effective. In addition, Berzonsky states that individuals should be able to employ all three strategies for identity formation (unless there are developmental constrains on strategic competence) and attributes differences in strategy usage to motivational factors. Such motivational factors can include stylistic preferences (i.e., individual factors) and/or environmental demands, constraints, or incentives. Touching on the tension between situational exigencies and dispositional influences, Berzonsky states that while all three styles can be employed, individuals tend to develop stable characteristic orientations (rather than acquired skills) that are resistant to change.

Consistent with this view is my conceptualization of the identity configurations as temporary approaches that all trainees’ can assume and my speculations (based on narratives of advanced trainees) about the form that such configurations may take if occupied more consistently.

In Dialogue with Personality Theories

As I noted in the Literature Review chapter (p. 22) I view personality as a broad construct that encompasses identity. Throughout the presentation of the theory and the discussion

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157 In addition to the aspect of effectiveness, I focus on what I termed the vitality of trainees’ identities, referring to the development of identities that are embedded in a developed subjective sense of oneself, allowing expression of trainees’ personal abilities and promoting personal growth. Familiarity with one’s strengths and limitations enables one to find suitable professional settings in which to be challenged appropriately rather than frustrated.
of my ideas I refer to trainees’ personality as a preexisting structure that impacts their approach to identity formation. Thus, it makes sense to discuss my constructs as they relate to theories of personality. In what follows, I will briefly explore my ideas in relation to two well-known and well-researched personality theories: the “Big Five” Factors Model (or Five Factor Model; FFM) and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI).

The Big Five Factor Model

The “Big Five” refers to a five-factor model of personality, which reflects a consensus among a substantial number of personality researchers on the primary importance of five dimensions (i.e., a range between extremes) representing core personality traits: Surgency/Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience/Intellect\(^\text{158}\) (Wiggins & Trapnell, 1997). Personality traits are typically defined as dimensions of individual differences. Thus, the big five model is more likely to have relevance to the aspects in my theory that touch on the variation among trainees (i.e., identity configurations) than on the more normative aspects of identity formation (i.e., differentiation-separation). Since the Big Five is not a conceptual model, but rather represents five independent dimensions of personality, I will discuss the two concepts I see as relevant to my ideas separately: the dimension of openness to experience and, to a lesser extent, extraversion.

Openness to experience. Openness to experience as a dimension of personality is seen in the breadth, depth, and permeability of consciousness, and in the recurrent need to enlarge and examine experience (McCrae & Costa, 1997). Individuals who are high on the dimension of openness are able to grasp new ideas and enjoy doing so and have a wide and ever-increasing

\(^{158}\) Evidence of this theory has been growing over the past 50 years, beginning with the research of Fiske (1949) and later expanded upon by other researchers including Norman (1963), McCrae & Costa (1987), and Goldberg (1992).
range of interests. They actively seek experiences, enjoying both the process of exploring and the discovery of novelty. While openness can be inferred from observable speech and behavior (McCrae & Costa, 1989), according to McCrae and Costa (1997), it is fundamentally “a matter of inner experience, a mental phenomenon related to the scope of awareness or the depth and intensity of consciousness” (p. 835).

These characteristics of the dimension of openness to experience seem to parallel the combination of the two dialectical identity configurations of open to experience and meaning-maker (as illustrated in the case of Samantha, p. 196) in my framework. While the open to experience focuses on the external environment and meaning-maker on inner experience, both involve active exploration of new territories, malleable boundaries around the self, and continuous enlargement of experience. Indeed, individuals who are high on the Big Five dimension of openness tend to be characterized by behavioral flexibility (i.e., consistent with the open to experience) and rich and complex emotional lives (i.e., consistent with the meaning-maker). It is possible that the quality I term fluidity, which underlies both identity configurations, relates to the personality dimension of openness to experience. Supporting this hypothesis are McCrae and Costa (1997), who in their review of the personality dimension of openness to experience state that “need for variety, tolerance of ambiguity, and preference for complexity all represent motivational aspects of Openness” (p. 832). In my framework too, the dialectical configurations represent the ability to engage, often with enjoyment or appreciation, with

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159 During the analysis of the data, I found the configurations of open to experience and meaning-maker to greatly overlap. In fact, the attempt to differentiate between them led to the distinction I came to make between the processes of differentiation and psychological separation, with each configuration representing an emphasis on one of these processes.
multiple, ambiguous, and complex challenges by fluidly shifting among different identity tasks and modes of experience.

Extraversion. Contemporary conceptions of extraversion tend to see it as composed of six primary traits of venturesome, affiliation, positive affectivity, energy, ascendance, and ambition. Throughout the changing conceptions of the construct the interpersonal components of the trait have been common to all the models of major theorists, who continue to view extraverts as gregarious and socially ascendant individuals (Watson & Clark, 1997). Recent conceptualizations have also stressed the positive affective component of the trait, especially with regard to rewarding performance. That is, compared to introverts, extroverts view themselves as more emotionally and pleasurably engaged in various aspects of their life. Watson and Clark (1997) see individual differences in positive emotionality to form the core of the construct, tying together the various aspects it includes. Tellegen (1985) has argued that extraversion reflects individual differences in a behavioral activation system, which is thought to control active approach and avoidance behaviors in response to rewards, with high extroversion indicating active, pleasure-seeking behavior.

The conceptual relation of the dimension of extraversion to my concepts is not a straightforward one. The centrality of positive affectivity in behavioral activation along with approach behaviors does bring to mind the combination of meaning-maker and open to experience configurations, which is characterized by emotional engagement, active (inner and external) exploration and receptivity to the impact of others.\footnote{Older conceptualizations, which tended to portray extroverts as unreflective and focused on the external world as opposed to inner experience, are no longer common, with recent models tending to stress the more adaptive and productive aspects of this disposition (Watson & Clark, 1997).}  This combination is consistent...
with the trait of venturesomeness—reflecting adventurousness, enjoyment of exciting activities, and seeking out stimulating environments—that is part of the dimension of extraversion.

The centrality of positive affectivity in the extrovert is also suggestive of the reactive configuration in which emotional experience is primary in guiding behavior. In my sample, the combination of reactive (typically a middle point reactive) and open to experience was relatively common, appearing in five narratives (31.3% of dual classification narratives). The narratives of advanced trainees suggested that this combination is a constructive one. Specifically, the broad exposure to a variety of experiences characteristic of the open to experience, along with emotional engagement in these experiences that is typical of the reactive, results in receptivity to the influence of the training environment, promoting over time the development of reflective capacities (as trainees process their emotional reaction to the various experiences they have).

*The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)*

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is a widely used and extensively researched personality instrument for non-psychiatric populations (Murray, 1990; Myers & McCaulley, 1985). The essence of the theory is that basic differences in the ways individuals prefer to use their perception and judgment underlie seemingly random variation in behavior. It is based on Jung’s (1921/1971) theory of psychological types and was intended by the authors to be an inventory of basic preferences rather than a measure of traits (Myers & McCaulley, 1985). It is a forced-choice, self-report inventory purporting to generate preference scores that describe interaction in four interlocking dimensions (Murray, 1990).

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161 The MBTI’s indices of reliability and validity have been extensively investigated and have been judged acceptable (Murray, 1990). Evaluating the MBTI based on review of research, Murray (1990) states that the four scales probably do not measure adequately what Jung intended and that his theory is probably too complicated to be
The MBTI is composed of four dichotomies derived from Jung’s (1921/1971) theory: extraversion/introversion (called attitudes), sensing/intuition, and thinking/feeling (termed functions) and judging/perceiving (Myers & McCaulley, 1985). Depending on how they are rated on each of these dichotomous scales, participants are classified into one of 16 types (represented by the first letter of each dimension; e.g., ESTJ or INFP) that indicate what their preferences are. In what follows, I will briefly describe the MBTI’s dimensions and outline areas of similarity and difference between this model and my ideas.

The extraversion-introversion dimensions are referred to as attitudes and reflect how individuals orient themselves to and receive their energy (Murray, 1990). Jung (1921/1971) understood extraversive individuals to focus their attention on external objects, to be dependent for their self-concept on the views of others, and to receive their energy from the outside world. Introversive types are more concerned with inner psychological processes, are relatively unconcerned with others’ evaluations and opinions of them, and receive their energy through solitary activities. In their reliance on external feedback versus concern with inner processes the extraversion and the introversion dimensions bear some resemblance to my conceptualization of the reactive and meaning-maker configurations, respectively. In addition, the difference in source of energy (external vs. internal worlds) echoes the difference in emphasis of attention between the open to experience and the meaning-maker configurations, respectively.

\[\text{captured by an objective measure. Yet the MBTI has been praised as a practical assessment whose constructs have been clarified by extensive research.}\]

\[162\text{ In Jung's (1921/1971) theory all components interact, and the difference primarily is the extent to which they are under conscious or unconscious control.}\]
Jung’s (1921/1971) dichotomy of Sensation-Intuition reflects two different modes of perceiving. Sensation types prefer to receive data primarily from the five senses, focusing on the present and on concrete information. Intuitive types prefer to go beyond the information given by the senses and look for meanings and associations. There is focus on the future, with a view toward patterns and possibilities. This dichotomy is similar to some extent to the reactive and meaning-maker configurations, which represent emphasis on immediate emotional experience versus reflecting on one’s emotional experience, respectively.

The Thinking-Feeling dichotomy reflects two different ways of judging or making decisions. Both types strive to make rational choices, using the data received from their perceiving functions, described above. Thinking types prefer to arrive at judgment by logical or impersonal methods, in contrast to Feeling types who base their judgments primarily on values and on subjective evaluation of person-centered concerns. This dichotomy is somewhat reminiscent of the structure-reliant versus open to experience configurations; whereas the structure-reliant configuration is associated with the attempt to apply general laws in psychotherapy work, emphasizing objectivity and consistency, the open to experience configuration uses person-centered considerations and emphasizes subjectivity and uniqueness.

Finally, the Judgment-Perception dichotomy reflects preferences for judging or perceiving functions. Those who score high on the Judgment dimension prefer things to be planned, orderly, and completed and for issues to be resolved. Those who choose the Perception function prefer to live in a more flexible, spontaneous manner and to keep options open and adapt to life. This distinction again bears resemblance to the emphases on stability and structure in the structure-reliant versus change and flexibility in the open to experience.
To summarize, the MBTI’s dimensions are reminiscent of certain qualities of my identity configurations and tend to relate to identity configurations at either the level of differentiation or psychological separation (i.e., structure-reliant and open to experience, and reactive and meaning-maker). However, there are not consistent nor systematic relationships that can be drawn. This suggests, in my view, that personality and identity are interrelated, yet distinct, structures, with overlapping and discrete qualities. Accordingly, theories of personality and identity are likely to overlap, but to represent somewhat different perspectives on similar data. In terms of the structure of the two theories, the MBTI and my framework do resemble each other in that they both include “type-like” constructs (i.e., the types of the MBTI and the identity configurations), derived based on different combinations of underlying qualities (i.e., MBTI’s dichotomous dimensions and my identity tasks).

An important difference between the two theories concerns the dichotomous nature of the MBTI’s dimensions versus the dialectical nature of my identity tasks. Specifically, while in the MBTI individuals can theoretically occupy a single point between two opposite dimensions (e.g., between extroversion and introversion), in my framework, holding the tension among the four identity tasks is not only possible but desirable. Accordingly, in the MBTI individuals are classified to a particular type representing a combination of four positions on the dichotomous scales. In contrast, in my framework, individuals can fluidly shift among various identity configurations; the dialectical configurations encompass within them the non-dialectical configurations and represent fluidity among approaches to identity formation. That being said, it is important to note that an individual’s psychological type in the MBTI is more than the sum of the four individual preferences, but is a function of the interaction between them. That is, similar to the way the identity tasks change depending on the balance among them, the MBTI’s
dimensions interact to create different dynamic profiles. In addition, research shows that responses on the MBTI, especially on the Extraversion-Introversion and Sensation-Intuition scales, may change with the time of day, suggesting fluidity among the types (Murray, 1990).

**Summary of Theoretical Implications**

Exploring my ideas in the context of other research in the areas of identity formation and psychotherapists’ development, it seems that the idea of fluidity among various identity configurations has more explanatory power and is more relatable to other models and theories than the specific identity configurations. That is, the distinction between dialectical and non-dialectical identity configurations, rather than the six identity configurations I outlined, may be a more useful framework to understand variation in identity formation of psychotherapists in training. Nevertheless, I do find the elaboration that the various identity configurations provide—especially their formulation in terms of trainees’ experience in training and psychotherapy—to add something meaningful and useful. Remaining at the level of dialectics, although it would constitute a more parsimonious framework, would also limit the ability to account for certain variations in the data. For example, the relatively common combination in the sample of the reactive (i.e., non-dialectical) and open to experience (i.e., dialectical) configurations (i.e., 5, 31.3% of dual classification narratives) suggests that differences in identity formation in the data cannot be fully understood in terms of dialectical versus non-dialectical configurations, as these too are in a dynamic tension. My experience with the development of a coding system to examine the reliability of my interpretations of the data in terms of the identity configurations supports this point. Specifically, coders found the distinction between non-dialectical and
dialectical configurations\textsuperscript{163} easier to make than among the four identity configurations; nevertheless they were able to reliably code statements as representing one of each of the four identity configurations,\textsuperscript{164} suggesting the existence of meaningful difference among them (beyond their dialectical and non-dialectical nature).

In summary, the desirability of fluidity of identity is the main conclusion I have reached based on my analysis.\textsuperscript{165} The dialectical versus non-dialectical nature of the identity configurations expresses this idea. In addition, I view the identity configurations as tools to think about individual differences in identity formation in terms that are close to the lived experience of psychotherapist trainees. Accordingly, the following discussion of the application of the above ideas to training will address the main conclusion of promoting fluidity,\textsuperscript{166} as well as specify the ways in which the concept of identity configurations can be utilized in training.

Practical Implications for Training

As noted above, I view my ideas as tools to think about the subject of identity formation of psychotherapists in training. Beyond hopefully offering a compelling perspective on this issue, my ideas have practical relevance to training. The notion that the various identity configurations emerge out of the interactions between self and context suggests the crucial role of the training environment in shaping the professional development of psychotherapist trainees. More specifically, the theoretical framework I put forward proposes that different identity

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\textsuperscript{163} The coding system included the four identity configurations that were clearly identified in the data: the non-dialectical configurations of reactive and structure-reliant and the dialectical configurations of open to experience and meaning-maker.

\textsuperscript{164} The two additional configurations of the wanderer and analyzer were not included in the coding system as they did not fully emerge in the sample and represent theoretical possibilities.

\textsuperscript{165} A related conclusion is that of the importance of awareness of one’s therapeutic style and professional preferences, especially when fluidity of identity is limited.

\textsuperscript{166} The related conclusion of increasing trainees’ awareness of their therapeutic style will also be discussed.
configurations may emerge at different times as a function of individual capacities and contextual circumstances. Training programs have the mandate to intervene in both areas. They can help trainees expand and develop new skills and capacities and they can work to create learning environments that promote professional growth. In what follows I will discuss different implications my ideas can have for training, making suggestions for interventions with trainees and at the level of curriculum.167


167 This discussion is informed by my own view of optimal professional development of psychotherapists in training, which I described previously. While I came to articulate it in specific terms based on my analysis of the data, it nonetheless involves a certain leap from the actual data, reflecting the complex interplay of participants’ accounts and my own subjective values, beliefs, and personal experience.

Promoting Optimal Professional Development – The Training Perspective

Working with the data I came to view optimal professional development as one in which the evolving identity meets the needs of both the trainee and the context. An optimal process of identity formation involves constructive interactions between trainees and the professional environment, where trainees can give expression to their particular abilities and interests, challenge themselves appropriately, and deal effectively with professional demands. I conceptualize this in terms of vitality and resiliency of identity. The training environment in turn (hopefully) affords appropriate opportunities for learning and development, and poses challenges at a level that trainees can meet. I argue that such an optimal situation depends on trainees’ ability to shift fluidly among identity tasks, creating different identity configurations depending on changing contexts and circumstances. I also propose that trainees’ awareness of their particular ways of working—their strengths and limitations—would promote a good fit between them and the professional setting in which they operate and could potentially compensate for
How can training programs promote fluidity among identity tasks and configurations and increase trainees’ awareness of their therapeutic style?

One obvious way is through the selection of students who can more easily shift among different modes of being in the world. That is, the ideas put forward could serve as a framework to guide selection of students. For instance, thinking in terms of the identity tasks, attention may be directed at selecting candidates who appear to be curious and open to exploration of novel ideas and experiences, emotionally engaged and reflective, receptive to the impact of others, and able to make and sustain commitments. This is a considerably complex issue that goes beyond the scope of this discussion. It touches on various aspects of the selection process, from identification of desirable qualities, to assessment of targeted qualities within the constraints of the admission process, to structural and political issues within programs and within the field (e.g., the tension between research and clinical work and its implications for the selection process; Fauber, 2006; Metzger, 2011). Accordingly, the following discussion will maintain the focus that has guided this inquiry from the beginning: already accepted trainees. In what follows I will discuss two ways in which training programs can promote professional development through encouraging fluidity and awareness. The first is more subtle. I suggest that the concept of identity tasks can serve as a tool with which to think about the structure of training, specifically the desired balance among its various components (e.g., clinical work versus supervision). The second is a more practical recommendation intended to promote fluidity and awareness by actively engaging with students in questions of professional development. I will also discuss potential applications of the concept of identity configuration.

\^168 Fluidity among identity tasks involves awareness of one’s therapeutic style. It is in the case of decreased fluidity that a focus on increasing awareness can be helpful.
Psychotherapy Training and Identity Tasks

Trainees’ identities are developed through their interactions with their training environment (embedded in and reflective of the larger cultural context). The concept of the four identity tasks is a way to organize the data participants provided about how they go about developing their identities. These tasks are inherently interactive, taking place between trainees and the professional context.169

Exploring-committing dialectic. With respect to training, the task of exploring concerns the variety of ideas and experiences to which training programs expose their students. Examples would be introducing trainees to a range of theoretical perspectives, treatment models, client populations, and clinical supervisors and striving for diversity among faculty and students. In my view, attention should be given to providing such experiences within the formal structure of the program, as well as encouraging trainees to explore beyond the boundaries of the program (e.g., by requiring externship, connecting trainees to list serves that announce various professional conferences and activities). That is, the message about the value of broadening one’s horizons can be conveyed through action (i.e., as implemented in the curriculum and structure of the program) and education (i.e., through guidance of students). I think of it as a balance between the training program’s responsibility to educate and the freedom and responsibility of trainees to shape and take ownership of their professional and personal development.170

169 Specifically, the task of exploring refers to experimentation with various learning experiences and the entertainment of different options for self-identifications that the training environment affords. Making commitments involves receptivity to the impact of the training environment and self-definition vis-à-vis others. Feeling refers to trainees’ emotional reactions to the training experiences and interactions with others, and reflection involves processing such experiences, often with training figures. The training environment is not limited to the trainees’ programs, as trainees often seek training opportunities beyond their programs. However, I do view training programs as the central factor in providing training opportunities as well as encouraging going outside the program.

170 While I see diversity of experiences as contributing to professional development of psychotherapists, this is of course a subjective matter relating to the specific identities of training programs. Training programs are likely to
The task of committing is inherent to the educating role of training programs. That is, trainees come to define themselves and commit to certain ideas, ways of working, and professional roles through their interactions with various training figures who teach them and serve as role models in a variety of formal and informal ways. Another way to think about the task of committing with respect to the training environment is in terms of stability and consistency of training experiences. In other words, training programs can provide trainees opportunities for sustained engagement in certain activities, ideas, and clinical and supervisory experiences, thereby allowing for the kind of in-depth and complex learning that can happen over time.

Accordingly, maintaining the tension between the tasks of exploring and committing in training manifests in the attempt to strike a balance between breadth and depth of training experiences, respectively. This is a complex and challenging issue, as training involves not only psychotherapy work, which requires both range and depth of skills and knowledge, but also research. There is much to learn within a limited period of time. Participants in my sample in evaluating their training programs recognized the considerable challenge training programs face in this respect. An example of negotiating breadth and depth of experience would be providing students opportunities to conduct long-term psychotherapy (e.g., in a clinic affiliated with the program) along with clinical field placements that involve short-term work with a variety of clients. vary in terms of the heterogeneity of experiences they provide and the emphasis and value they place on novelty and expansion. At the very least, I believe, training programs should engage in this question and define themselves clearly and actively in this respect, allowing candidates to consider potential fit.
Indeed, Orlinsky and Rønnestad (2005), based on a 15-year worldwide study of psychotherapists’ career development, show that breadth and depth of psychotherapists’ experience across treatment modalities—more than anything else, including years of experience—is predictive of cumulative career development and professional growth. Accordingly, they argue that training programs would best serve their students if they provided them with experience in various treatment modalities. Furthermore, in order to promote effective and healing therapeutic work, they argue, trainees should learn how to open-mindedly explore and integrate the concepts and methods of various treatment models. The authors warn against theoretical foreclosure and recommend that training programs, if informed by a single theoretical orientation, teach it in a way that would not foreclose later acquisition of theoretical breadth.

Similarly, based on available evidence, theory, and clinical experience, Boswell and Castonguay (2007) outline a stage model of psychotherapy training, which includes five phases: preparation, exploration, identification, consolidation, and integration. Their phases of exploration and identification, focusing on teaching psychotherapy work, resonate with my recommendations. Specifically, they suggest introducing students to a variety of treatment models, followed by encouragement to commit themselves at least temporarily to one orientation to allow the development of competency. The subsequent phases of consolidation and integration involve the application of the knowledge students gained to a variety of clinical roles and settings and the integration of other influences, thereby expanding and revising prior commitments. These latter two phases add the aspect of continuous change, which in my framework comes from the movement between exploring and committing. The main difference between Boswell and Castonguay’s conceptualization and mine is that they propose a sequential model, whereas I suggest that these phases happen simultaneously and repeatedly throughout
development. Ladany (2007), in reviewing Boswell and Castonguay’s model, supports my approach, stating that it is not “necessary or practical to move trainees along in the stepwise fashion noted... trainees are perfectly equipped to handle training that attends to all five phases simultaneously, which in reality is what probably happens anyway” (p. 393).

**Feeling-reflecting dialectic.** With respect to training, the task of feeling manifests in trainees’ emotional engagement in training experiences and with the training environment, from exciting ideas to interactions with mentors and peers. What is unique to psychotherapy training as compared to other academic or professional programs is the centrality of clinical work, which by its essence involves interpersonal engagement with other people. The significance of reflection too is typical of psychotherapy training, occupying a central role in learning and conducting psychotherapy work. With respect to psychotherapy programs, the attempt to maintain an optimal tension between emotionally engaging training experiences and opportunities to process and reflect on such experiences manifests primarily in the balance between clinical work and supervision. Through the back and forth between psychotherapy and supervision, trainees learn to better maintain the tension between emotional engagement and reflection in their psychotherapy work (with clients in the room and outside of the room). That is, in their inclusion of opportunities for processing clinical experiences, training programs not only teach students the trade of psychotherapy, but also model certain values regarding reflection on one’s work (Kuyken, Peters, Power, & Lavender, 2003; Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003). This tension between participation and reflection can be seen to take place in more subtle and informal ways in other training experiences as well: in the discussions with an advisor about one’s research; in reflecting on readings with instructors in class; and in processing various experiences with peers. Based on my analysis of the narratives, I recommend that training
programs create formal opportunities for reflection and expand such discussions to professional issues beyond clinical work. I will discuss this issue in the following section.

In summary, I argue that by assuring that all identity tasks are well represented in the curriculum and by striving to maintain a balance among various training components relating to these tasks, training programs could promote active engagement of trainees in these tasks and potentially model fluidity. Such decisions regarding the structure and curriculum of the program shape and reflect the identities of training programs, and consequently influence the identity formation of their trainees.

**Encouraging Fluidity and Awareness through Dialogue about Issues of Professional Development**

As noted, based on my analysis of the narratives, I have come to view fluidity of identity and awareness of one’s therapeutic style as important in promoting professional development. Beyond encouraging engagement in all identity tasks in terms of training structure and curriculum, how can training programs promote fluidity and awareness? The answer to that question is located, in my view, in the area in which identities are created: the interaction between self and context.

Specifically, my main recommendation for training programs is to create formal formats in which to actively engage with trainees in a dialogue about issues of professional development. I am suggesting a more encompassing exchange than the one typically taking place in various forms of supervision, focusing on trainees’ professional development and identities as psychotherapists. Examples would be helping trainees to understand their evolving therapeutic style, the ways in which they are similar to and different from others, and to place that style in a
meaningful personal context; identifying areas of professional development that trainees would like to expand or change, or that pose a challenge for them; allowing trainees the space to engage with and negotiate the many professional demands and often conflicting personal needs; and exploring different professional possibilities and considering current development with respect to future aspirations.

I believe that such encounters should be a required part of the curriculum (e.g., a once-a-month group meeting led by an outside instructor, such as a former student), thereby conveying the message that engagement in these issues is part of the responsibility of being a psychotherapist. Since the data and research (Orlinsky & Rønnestad, 2005; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992b; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 2003b) indicate that different developmental stages are characterized by particular challenges, it is recommended that such encounters be organized per cohort. To allow beginner trainees to learn from more advanced trainees’ and for the latter to have the opportunity to be in the role of guiding others, occasional meetings of all classes are also recommended.

I see such an exchange as a means to promoting both fluidity and awareness. Specifically, the act of mutual dialogue in itself contributes to greater fluidity, since it embodies movement among all identity tasks. As trainees engage in dialogue with supervisors, teachers, mentors, and peers, they are exposed to different ways of thinking and working (i.e., exploration). Such exchange involves more than exposure to other minds; it also encourages an active process of self-definition (i.e., committing) through comparison to others. That is, the focus on trainees’ professional development on the one hand and the active engagement with other people on the other hand promote negotiation between self and other and receptivity to the impact of others. Similarly, such a dialogue with supervisors, mentors, and peers inherently involves both
emotional participation and processing of trainees’ experience. By experimenting with a variety of discussion formats, trainees can play with different levels of emotional engagement and reflection. In other words, as trainees participate in a mutual dialogue with others, they are “practicing” fluidity among identity tasks.

In addition, through the processing of their training experiences with others and exposure to the experiences of peers and training figures, trainees could come to identify their particular professional interests, aspirations, concerns, and struggles, as well as their characteristic ways of engaging with them. Stated differently, trainees would become more aware of the ways in which they develop their identities through the performance of the four identity tasks. They would potentially become sensitized to their typical ways of seeking and experimenting with various training experience, of making commitments to certain ideas or ways of working, and of negotiating emotional engagement and reflection. Such increased awareness would give them the choice to actively work through areas of challenge and expand their characteristic ways of forming their identities, thereby leading to increased fluidity. Alternatively, as noted previously, familiarity with their therapeutic style, preferences, and aspirations, as well as exposure to various professional and identity options, would allow trainees to make suitable professional choices, finding clinical settings that fit them and where they can make significant contributions.

Supporting this recommendation, Rønnestad and Skovholt (2003) argue that continuous reflection\footnote{Rønnestad and Skovholt (2003) define reflection as “a continuous and focused search for a more comprehensive, nuanced and in-depth understanding of oneself and others, and of the process and phenomena that the practitioner meets in his or her work” (p. 29).} is “a prerequisite for optimal learning and professional development at all levels of experience” (p. 29). They see the willingness to process one’s professional experiences and challenges in particular as a precondition to avoid a stagnant developmental process that leads to
mismatch between competence and task. While they do not call for formal engagement with trainees in issues of professional development, they state that “a stimulating and supportive work environment, including informal dialogue among colleagues and in formal supervision, impact the reflective capacity and adaptive handling of the challenges encountered” (p. 30).

Finally, through exposure to and comparison to others, trainees could come to recognize more clearly the personal nature of their therapeutic style and professional path—the ways in which they are different than others. I am suggesting that the notion that psychotherapists have their own unique way of working and developing is an important message and not an obvious one to convey to students. It is my belief that even with the very structured, manual-based, treatment models, different psychotherapists have their distinct ways of working (which also change across relational and professional contexts) (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2001). The distinctively unique narratives of participants in my sample support this view. Conveying to trainees the message that there are different kinds of psychotherapists would allow them to shift the focus from attempting to attain a certain ideal or meet (presumed) external expectations (as evident in the non-dialectical configurations), to figuring out what works for them as psychotherapists and to expand their style from a position of acceptance rather than frustration (Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003). Such a dialogue with others who are both similar and different, if guided by this notion, would contribute to trainees’ sense of uniqueness as well as afford them opportunities for expansion through exposure to other therapeutic styles and professional possibilities.

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172 My view is consistent with relational thought within psychoanalytic circles, which emphasizes the particular dyad of psychotherapist and client, each with their own unique contributions (Hoffman, 1991; Stern, 2010).
Considering the case illustration of Jane whose capacities were overwhelmed by professional demands, leading to a sense of ineffectiveness and considerable disappointment, how could such an exchange with training figures or peers have helped her? At the very basic level, discussing her feelings of futility, frustration, and doubts—either with peers or with training figures—would have potentially lessened some of the sense of abandonment and isolation that she seemed to experience. In addition, the act of reflecting on her experience with others would have created some observatory distance, helping her to contain some of the intense feelings she experienced in psychotherapy work and develop her reflective capacities over time. Most crucially in Jane’s case, who manifested a brittle sense of self so striking given her advanced stage, such processing of her experience and exposure to the experiences of her peers would have allowed her to learn from and begin to consolidate her training experiences into a familiar and personally meaningful therapeutic style. Finally, increased awareness and acceptance of her particular way of working and developing—with its strengths and limitations—would have, in addition to allowing her to work through some of her challenges, empowered her to make more suitable professional choices, finding clinical settings that fit her abilities and interests and thus promoting a greater sense of effectiveness and satisfaction.

Reviewing research findings indicating the therapeutic alliance to be a strong change-promoting factor in psychotherapy, Angus and Kagan (2007) extend the notion of alliance to the training of psychotherapists. They state that the supervisory alliance, and by implication the educational alliance between educators and students, should be the focus of psychotherapy training programs. The establishment of trusting, emphatic, and involved relational bonds between supervisors and trainees, they argue, promotes trainees’ personal agency, identification of shared goals for psychotherapeutic work, and effective acquisition and implementation of
specific therapeutic interventions. However, they distinguish between the therapeutic and supervisory relationships, noting that in psychotherapy the goal is to help clients to live fuller lives through the elaboration of their life stories and acquisition of new skills and self-knowledge. In contrast, in supervision the focus is on the relationship trainees have with their clients. They state, “the supervisee’s personal development is in the service of providing a better outcome for the client, not an end in itself” (p. 375). While I agree that the primary objective of supervision is the betterment of the client’s life (and of the psychotherapeutic relationship), I argue that extending the scope of supervision to the elaboration of trainees’ story, skills, and self-knowledge (i.e., active engagement in their identity), would promote this primary objective.

Utilizing the concept of identity configuration. The concept of identity configuration can be a helpful tool when working with trainees. It can be utilized in the context of the kind of formal discussions I recommend as a way to think about trainees’ professional development. Specifically, the various identity configurations can be taught and serve as a framework or starting point to discuss the ways in which trainees go about developing their identities. The exposure to different ways of identity formation—through the theoretical concept of identity configurations and peers’ various experiences—can potentially contribute to the expansion of trainees’ style, as well as sensitize them to their difference from others, promoting their sense of uniqueness.

The concept of identity configuration could also be employed in the one-on-one interaction in supervision. Supervisors could use this construct to frame trainees’ approach to psychotherapy work and professional development and adapt their supervision style accordingly. They could also use them explicitly in their work with trainees, expanding the engagement in clinical work to trainees’ therapeutic style and professional development. I will illustrate these
two points by referring back to the case illustration of John (i.e., structure-reliant configuration) and specifically to his experience with psychodynamic supervisors who reportedly got him “disenfranchised by the psychodynamic work.”

Describing the sources of his frustration, John stated that these supervisors “really should know that they’re dealing with students” and make the effort to explain their way of working more explicitly, be sensitive to beginner trainees’ needs to help their clients in more tangible ways, and provide students with more concrete guidelines. Accordingly, a clinical supervisor working with John might have understood John’s way of organizing his experience in training in terms of the structure-reliant identity configuration. Having this concept in mind could have sensitized the supervisor to John’s tendency to establish structure and limit exploration as a way of dealing with the ambiguity and unpredictability inherent in clinical work, especially early in his development. It might also have helped the supervisor to recognize John’s ability to use structure effectively in the work—to engage consistently with a primary model—and thus frame it as a strength to capitalize on. Accordingly, such a supervisor could have initially worked with John’s use of structure, providing him with a few simple techniques (e.g., asking open-ended questions), guidelines, (e.g., emphasizing listening, limiting interpretations), or theoretical concepts (e.g., explaining the idea of projection identification as a way to think about a perplexing dynamic) to anchor him and guide his work. Being sensitized to John’s need for clarity and given the psychodynamic model’s complex and ambiguous nature, such a supervisor might have potentially spent more time explaining, initially in a simplified manner, his or her way of working, emphasizing aspects of the psychodynamic model that can provide some

In the case illustration I presented, I described John’s relationship to the psychodynamic model, but due to considerations of maintaining reasonable length I did not include this account of his work with psychodynamic supervisors.
structure. Gradually, the supervisor could have introduced more ambiguity and complexity, helping John to integrate other influences and expand his style. Indeed, as John himself stated, when he was introduced in internship to a psychodynamic model that offered more structure he was open to integrating it into his primary model (See case illustration, p. 140).

The supervisor could have also used the concepts of structure-reliant and open to experience and present them to John as two approaches to identity formation that trainees may use under different circumstances and developmental stages. These concepts could have been employed as a starting point for a discussion with John, helping him become more aware of and monitor his approach to identity formation, his typical ways—flexible and less flexible ones—of coping with professional demands. These concepts could also have been used as a framework for the learning and developmental process taking place in supervision. For instance, one of the goals of supervision could have been framed in terms of movement towards the open to experience configuration. Alternatively, if, for example, the supervisor had noticed that John has greater capacity to tolerate ambiguity and explore a greater variety of therapeutic approaches with a particular client (i.e., occupies a more open to experience configuration with this client), this could have become a topic of exploration in supervision. Such a dialogue could have increased John’s awareness of the various self-experiences he has with different clients, gradually leading to greater ownership and fluidity among different identity configurations.

In summary, the concept of the identity configurations can be used as a framework to think about issues of development of psychotherapy trainees—by training figures and trainees themselves—and guide educational interventions or choices. The concept can also be used
explicitly when working with trainees as a basis for exploration or as an organizing framework that can accompany the learning process.\textsuperscript{174}

My recommendation to create formal opportunities to engage with trainees’ in issues of professional development may seem trivial. There is a sense that such discussions take place all the time informally and more formally in supervision. However, interviewing the participants in my sample, it was striking to me how many of them stated that this was the first opportunity they had to talk about their professional development in that way.\textsuperscript{175} Similarly, the majority of participants in my sample in evaluating their training programs desired more active involvement with supervisors, mentors, and peers, seeking guidance, support, and a space to explore issues of professional development.\textsuperscript{176} This is somewhat ironic, given that this is a profession that privileges interpersonal engagement and reflection as pathways to personal growth. I think that

\textsuperscript{174} My experience with the training of coders and testing the reliability of the identity configurations (see the Development of a Coding System section, p. 240) suggests that these are teachable constructs that can be reliably distinguished and applied to trainees’ experience.

\textsuperscript{175} In the inductive analysis of trainees’ evaluations of training, only two participants (6.9\%) mentioned increased self-awareness as a helpful aspect of training. This is in marked contrast to research indicating that trainees’ self-reflection and self-knowledge are among the most important factors promoting professional development (Orlinsky, & Rønnestad, 2005). On the other hand, when I asked participants in the interview which personal qualities they considered to be important for psychotherapists, 15 participants (52\%) mentioned self-awareness/self-reflection. Interestingly, even when discussing helpful aspects of supervision (i.e., the forum in which reflection on clinical work primarily takes place), participants talked about expansion of their therapeutic style but not of developing their reflective capacities. In addition, when asked in the background questionnaire about the extent to which their training program provided opportunities to discuss professional identity and the extent to which they discussed such issues in personal therapy, participants were significantly more likely to use the latter for such discussions ($t = -3.40$, $n = 26$, $p = .002$). Taken together, these findings suggest that participants in my sample, while appreciating self-awareness as an important quality for psychotherapists, do not conceive training program to play a significant role in developing such self-understanding. (See Appendix J for elaboration).

\textsuperscript{176} In the inductive analysis, the most significant theme to emerge from the analysis of participants’ evaluation of training was the centrality of active and personal engagement with the training environment to trainees’ professional development. This theme was manifested in trainees’ appreciation (and desire for more) of the holding function of training environment, supervision, and being part of a community. Taken together, this theme was expressed by 27 of the 29 participants (93.1\%), underscoring the personal and interactive nature of the process of becoming a psychotherapist. (See Appendix J).
the primacy of clinical supervision creates the misleading impression that such a dialogue does take place. However, the data suggest that in various forms of supervision, unless the student initiates discussion of professional and developmental issues, the focus is mostly on clinical work. Integrating such discussions with trainees into the curriculum, beyond providing the space for such engagement between trainees’ and the training environment, would also send the message that self-reflection is part of psychotherapists’ professional responsibilities.

Study Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. The first concerns the size and characteristics of the sample. Specifically, I have developed my ideas based on a sample of 29 participants. While this is a relatively substantial number for a narrative-analysis-based study, it is nevertheless a limited number given my goal to identify different patterns of identity formation. In addition, participants in the sample were primarily of European-American origin (79.3%) and female (79.3%). Although this is fairly consistent with the distribution in clinical psychology programs (see footnote 23, p. 71), I cannot make any observations concerning ethnicity/race and gender. Similarly, the majority of participants attended programs in New York (58.6%) and California (34.5%), which resulted in an over-representation of the psychodynamic orientation, reported by 62.1% of participants to characterize the theoretical orientation of their program. Furthermore, participants who chose to participate in this study potentially represent a particular group with respect to identity formation (e.g., greater preoccupation with issues of professional

177 In terms of theoretical perspectives that training program espouse, 18 participants (62.1%) named psychoanalytic-dynamic, eight (27.6%) cognitive-behavioral, three (10.3%) humanistic, two (6.9%) systemic, and one (3.4%) “other.” The over-representation of psychoanalytic-dynamic perspectives is likely due to the over-representation of programs located in New York, which tend to be more psychodynamic in orientation than those in other geographical locations.
This potential bias was somewhat mitigated by the fact that participants received monetary compensation for their contribution to the study rather than volunteered, thus suggesting a greater range of motivations for participation. In summary, the sample is relatively limited in size and may not be representative of the larger population of psychotherapists in training. In this chapter, I have explored potential conceptual relationships between my ideas and the ideas of others. Along with similarities in conceptualization, which strengthen the credibility of my findings, there were also important differences—these, I hope, suggest the potentially unique contribution of the results and ideas contained in this study.

A second limitation of this study is that interviews were conducted on one occasion, thereby limiting my ability to theorize about identity processes over time and contexts. Specifically, while I studied the identities that “emerged” in the interview with me, I cannot confidently speculate about “other identities” that the same participants might create in other relational contexts or at different times. This also limits my ability to theorize about the developmental path the different identity configurations may take. Despite these limitations, in presenting my theory I described the identity configurations as temporary positions that trainees may occupy (as suggested by the identity configurations I identified in the sample), as well as speculated about the form these identity configurations may take and the resultant developmental path if occupied more consistently. The latter constitute a greater interpretive leap from the data and are based on the analysis of narratives of advanced trainees. The majority of participants in

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178 The description of the study that was given as part of the recruitment attempt states that the study was focused on “psychotherapist trainees’ professional development,” seeking “to examine psychotherapist trainees’ unique experiences of becoming a psychotherapist.” (See Appendix E.)

179 This phrasing does not mean to suggest the emergence of existing entities but rather refers to the long and complex process that began with the interviews, continued with my analysis of the data these interviews produced, and concluded with the final formulation of these emergent identities.
my sample (20, 69%) were advanced trainees. Their narratives, spanning an extended period of time, permitted cautious speculation about participants’ identities across time and contexts in two ways. First, in telling their stories participants described their experience at different developmental stages, thus providing access to consistencies and variation in identity formation across time and contexts. Second, advanced trainees, especially those who were towards the end of their training, often presented with a more consolidated therapeutic repertoire and developed sense of themselves as psychotherapists, allowing them to speculate about the patterns that their professional path may take. Nevertheless, my ideas about identity formation across time and contexts are more speculative in nature and should be regarded accordingly.

An additional related limitation concerns the main conclusions I have reached about the desirability of fluidity and awareness for optimal professional development. My view of positive professional development, conceptualized in terms of the vitality and resilience of identities, is a subjective one reflecting the complex interactions among the data and my own experience and worldview. I partly deal with this intricate aspect of my theoretical framework (i.e., its subjective nature) through the inclusion of six elaborated case illustrations, which portray different identity configurations, allowing readers to evaluate my conclusions and reach their own.

Directions for Future Research

Attempts to find answers, especially when engaging in a complex issue such as identity formation, inevitably lead to further questions. Some of my suggestions for future research follow from the limitations of this study; others arise from the ideas I have developed.

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180 Four participants were at the end of their fourth year, eight at the end of their fifth year, six at the end of their sixth, one at the end of the seventh, and one was finishing her eighth year (she had only seven years of clinical experience and thus met the inclusion criteria, namely, "prior to licensure and up to seven years of clinical experience").
As noted, the sample in this study was limited in size and relatively homogeneous in terms of ethnicity/race, gender, and geographical location. Accordingly, future studies could examine the relevance and applicability of the theoretical framework I developed in other samples, representing more diverse groups of psychotherapist trainees. For example, future studies could examine whether the two theoretical configurations of the analyzer and wanderer can be identified in other samples more fully. Furthermore, are there configurations that are not present? What new configurations may arise?

Future studies could also examine individual differences among trainees in terms of fluidity of identity. In addition, looking at changes in identity configurations within trainees across different training contexts could illuminate the role of training environment, and specifically the challenges it poses, in trainees’ identity formation. While there is considerable research on psychotherapists’ development across extensive periods of time, studies focusing on smaller scale changes are sparse. Thus, focusing on the concept of identity configuration, future studies could explore, for example, the fluidity of identity in the course of days or weeks or semesters, across relational and professional contexts.

As a follow-up step that was beyond the scope of this study, it would be interesting and would contribute to the continued development of the theoretical framework presented to receive the feedback of psychotherapist trainees’ on these ideas. Which aspects of the theory most resonate with them? What is incompatible with their experience? Are there important aspects of their experience that are not represented?

My analysis of the data revealed four identity tasks that trainees perform as they create their identities: exploring, committing, feeling, and reflecting. Researchers in the area of identity
have investigated extensively the role of exploration and commitment. Psychotherapy research has examined psychotherapists’ emotional engagement and reflection with respect to psychotherapy and has shown reflection to be essential for professional development. The theoretical framework I have developed suggests that future research should focus on all four constructs and their interrelations as important to the identity formation of psychotherapists in training. In addition, future studies could extend the emphasis of this study beyond the training phase and examine the applicability of the ideas presented to other developmental stages. Moreover, the study of the four identity tasks could be expanded beyond professional identity to the study of identity formation in general. Research on psychotherapists’ development suggests that psychotherapists’ professional selves and personal selves are intertwined (Farber & Golden, 1997; Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992a). Indeed, the person of the psychotherapist is often primary in psychotherapy work (Gerson, 1996). It would be an interesting question to explore the relevance of the identity tasks (and configurations) in the general population. Are there tasks that are more relevant than others? How do they interact? What kind of identity configurations emerge, representing different ways of engaging with these tasks? For example, while it makes sense for reflection and emotional engagement to play an important role in identity formation, they are likely to have a somewhat different meaning outside of the context of psychotherapy work and psychotherapists’ development.

One of the primary findings of this study is the idea of dialectical versus non-dialectical identity configurations, representing, respectively, the ability versus difficulty to shift fluidly among various approaches to identity formation in response to changing demands. The feedback from coders who applied the concept of identity configurations to segments of narratives (see p. 244) suggests that the dialectical nature of identity, more than the specific identity configuration,
is easier to identify in the data. Similarly, when exploring my ideas in the context of existing research it was the quality of fluidity of identity that was most relatable. However, research on identity formation tends to focus on different ways of forming identities and to a lesser extent on the flexibility or rigidity of identity. Accordingly, future studies should expand the focus of current models of identities, or develop new models, looking at the level of movement between approaches.

Finally, the present study, while recognizing the central role the training environment plays in identity formation, focused on trainees as its primary subject. The study’s findings with respect to the training environment are based on the trainees’ perspectives, specifically on participants’ evaluations of their training program. The ideas presented suggest that the challenges the training environment poses to trainees interact with trainees’ abilities, resulting in various approaches to identity formation. Accordingly, future research should explore the factors that contribute to constructive interactions between trainees’ and their training environment (extending the focus beyond supervision) that promote learning and growth.

Conclusions

“To have a group of people who are going through the same thing, who are at the same place I am, right now everybody in my group thinks they’re horrible therapists, and that’s very helpful for me!”

-- Nicole, Beginner trainee

“… human relationships, you have to have human relationships in order to do psychotherapy… you have to get empathy in order to provide empathy.”

-- Eric, Advanced trainee
“Individual people along the way who took an interest in me... they’re not just formal teachers, you meet your teachers in life... I’ve met some of those along the way and they’ve been really helpful.”

-- Julia, Advanced trainee

This dissertation research began with the question of how psychotherapists in training develop their identities under what I argued are challenging professional and cultural circumstances. The present study’s answer to this question has been found, unexpectedly, in the question itself: various identity configurations—representing distinct approaches to identity formation—are created in response to and in interaction with contextual challenges. Expressing a similar notion, Rønnestad and Skovholt (2003) state that “the moments of truth in the individual’s development is how the counselor/therapist processes the difficulties/challenges that are encountered” (p. 39).

The notion that identities are created in the tension between self and context/culture has always been part of the conception of identity; however, this study takes a more far-reaching stance, suggesting that identities are fundamentally interactive and cannot be meaningfully understood without close examination of self-environment interactions. This perspective underscores the crucial role the training environment plays in the professional development and identity formation of psychotherapists in training and suggests the importance of continued attention to the training environments of psychotherapists.

Based on my analysis of the data, I argue that optimal approaches to identity formation—resulting in vital and resilient identities—are those that involve active engagement with the

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181 These quotes are taken from participants’ responses to the interview question of what they found helpful in their training in terms of their professional development.
professional and cultural context, responding appropriately to the challenges it poses. Given the multi-faceted and constantly changing nature of these challenges, it follows that flexibly shifting between various identity configurations (i.e., fluidity) would be most desirable. In contrast, undesirable approaches to identity formation represent attempts to minimize challenges rather than engaging with them. These latter approaches suggest inflexible interactions between trainees and their training and professional environment.

Accordingly, my main recommendation for training program involves promoting increased engagement, both of the training environment with trainees and of trainees’ with the challenges they encounter. The challenge for training programs in creating such mutual interactions with trainees is in providing a personally involved environment that is respectful of trainees’ subjectivities, allowing them to find their unique voice while guiding them through their particular challenges. It is the balance inherent to psychotherapy work between acceptance of self and expansion and change of self. As the majority of participants in my study suggest, becoming and being a psychotherapist is a very personal, and interpersonal, endeavor. Creating opportunities in training to engage with others in this developmental process would convey that message to trainees, encouraging them and helping them to find their unique professional path, a path that is always embedded in relational, professional, and cultural contexts.
CHAPTER VII: REFERENCES


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APPENDIX A: EVOLUTION OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

As stated in the research questions section, the initial research questions from the proposal phase changed and evolved according to the emerging findings throughout the analysis. In this Appendix I elaborate on two such developments. The first concerns the primary research question, and the second involves a linguistic analysis that was omitted from the study.

Research Questions

In the original proposal, the main research question was formulated as follows: “What are the different ways in which psychotherapist trainees form their identity as psychotherapists? Stated in Eriksonian terms: what are the different ways in which psychotherapist trainees use the processes of selective repudiation, mutual assimilation, and absorbing identifications in a configuration in forming their identity? Do they typically strive for a consistent identity (on the “modernist” end of the continuum), or do they demonstrate various identity configurations (on the “postmodernist” end of the continuum)?”

The latter two questions were proposed as a follow-up on an early discussion in the Literature Review chapter in the proposal about modern versus postmodern conceptions of identity. The controversy between modern and postmodern views of identity and self concerns both whether individuals inherently strive for consistent identity and whether that is even a desirable goal in our culture today. Modern notions of identity, while recognizing the search for identity as an attempt to reconcile and overcome the multiple conflicts of a divided self, still maintain fixed boundaries around the self and clear distinctions between inner and external, self and other; these boundaries allow for both connection and separation between
the individual and the outer world. It is a view of identity as continuous and consistent. In contrast, postmodern notions of identity see the self as fluid, fragmented, and multiple, with diffuse boundaries between inner and outer worlds. Erikson’s (1968) identity theory, in its emphasis on personal sameness and historical continuity, is consistent with the modernist tradition. However, following Schachter (2004, 2005), I originally suggested in the Literature Chapter of the proposal that despite its emphasis on sameness and continuity, Erikson’s theory is open to a more contemporary reading and can be seen as a forerunner of postmodern thinking (in this final manuscript I include this discussion in the Discussion chapter).

Thus, engaging in the ongoing discussion about the nature of contemporary identity, I proposed these two additional formulations of the primary research question. The first one uses three processes originally formulated by Erikson (1968) and reinterpreted by Schachter (2004, 2005) as opening Erikson’s ideas to more contemporary reading. Specifically, selective repudiation refers to a process whereby certain identifications are rejected and/or suppressed. Mutual assimilation suggests a synthesizing process whereby two or more identifications are merged into one, without rejecting either. Absorbing identifications in a configuration, Schachter suggests, may point to a third process by which different identifications are kept separate but continue to exist side-by-side. None are rejected; rather, they become organized and exist in a kind of dynamic balance. Schachter identifies the theoretical possibility that individuals may use these processes differentially, leading to different types of identity configurations that may include, in addition to coherent structures, also incoherent or contradictory ones. Thus, I used these three concepts to reflect the
different ways in which individuals can go about forming their identities, with the possibility of a range of identity configurations, from consistent to contradictory configurations.

Similarly, a second formulation touched directly on the modern-postmodern controversy, suggesting that the variety expected within individuals’ attempts to form an identity may be conceptualized using the “modern” and “postmodern” metaphors of identity. That is, while the current social and cultural context may require more fluid and multiple conceptions of self, I suggested that individuals will vary in terms of their reaction to this context, with some attempting to maintain consistency in the face of considerable fragmentation and division.

**Linguistic Analysis: The Discourse Attribute Analysis Program (DAAP)**

Included in the original research proposal was a plan to analyze the narratives not only qualitatively, but also linguistically to assess participants’ level of reflection. I saw the interview as providing an opportunity to participants for self-reflection and learning that might indicate their typical ways of dealing with such opportunities for growth in their professional life. Two assumptions were made in this regard. First, I assumed that if participants’ professional identities were in constant change (that is, participants were continuously absorbing new experiences and actively processing them), then at least some of the material that would come up in the interview would be new and unprocessed. Second, I assumed that if participants tended to make use of opportunities for learning and self-reflection, they would use the interview in a similar way. Thus, taken together, I expected that trainees who actively reflected on their experience and whose identity was constantly changing would use the interview to gain new understandings about their professional
development and would speak about it in an involved and connected way. In contrast, participants who avoided opportunities for meaning-making and whose identities were foreclosed and resistant to change would speak about their professional development in a removed, abstract, or pre-processed manner and would not use the interview to gain new insights. Participants’ responses were expected to vary on a continuum between these two poles.

Thus, I proposed to use the *Discourse Attribute Analysis Program (DAAP)* to subject the narratives to a process analysis that would track the cognitive and emotional experience of participants as they spoke about their professional development. The DAAP (Bucci & Maskit, 2005, 2007) is a computerized method for tracking linguistic variables of psychological importance in spoken and written language. It has been widely used in psycholinguistic and clinical research. It has the capability of tracking a variety of linguistics variables; in the research proposal, I suggested examining the following variables: Referential Activity (RA), as given by the Weighted Referential Activity Dictionary (WRAD), Disfluency (DF), and Reflection (REF). The theoretical framework that guides the DAAP acknowledges that multiplicity is an expected aspect of the psyche: the DAAP allows for the discernment of shifts in self-states, thus allowing exploration of that aspect of identity from a linguistic perspective. In order to explain my initial intentions, these basic variables, the measures derived from them, and the operation of the DAAP are described below.

**Referential Process (RP)**

According to the theory of the Referential Process (RP; Bucci, 2002) change in an emotion schema takes place through sequential occurrence and iteration of three major phases: *arousal, symbolizing in narrative,* and *reflection.* *Arousal* refers to the activation of
the “affective core,” the subsymbolic bodily and/or sensory component of the emotion schema, during the interview. *Symbolizing in narrative* is the process of connecting the subsymbolic affective experience to images and words—in the form of stories, fantasies, dreams or other narrative material—that serve to represent the activated schema but whose emotional meaning may not be understood. *Reflection* is the examining and reflecting on this narrative material verbally in the shared context of the interview, leading to emotional insight and ultimately to change in the emotion schema.

These phases are assessed by the following dictionaries:

*Weighted Referential Activity Dictionary (WRAD)*

The WRAD (Bucci & Maskit, 2005) is a dictionary (word list) containing 696 items, with weights ranging between -1 (the item is most common in low RA speech) and +1 (the item is most common in high RA speech), used for computer modeling of Referential Activity (RA) in spoken and written language. The RA dimension concerns the degree to which language reflects connection to nonverbal experience, including imagery and bodily and emotional experience, and evokes corresponding experience in the listener or reader. RA is primarily indicated by attributes of language style independent of content. High RA language is vivid and evocative; low RA language may be abstract, general, vague, or diffuse.

*Reflection (REF)*

The REF dictionary contains 618 items that concern how people think and communicate thoughts. The dictionary includes basic logic words, such as “if” and “but”; words referring to cognitive or logical functions, such as “think” and “believe,” or referring
to logical entities, such as “reason” and “cause”; words related to problems or failures of
cognitive or logical functions, such as “confuse”; words related to complex communicative
functions, such as “obfuscate” and “convince”; and words related to features of mental
functioning, such as “creative” and “logical.”

Disfluency (DF)

The DF dictionary contains exactly six items: “like,” “kind,” “know,” “mean,”
“well,” and the filled pause item, often transcribed as “uhm” or “uh,” and transcribed for
purposes of the DAAP system as “mm.” These are items without particular reference or
function that people use when they are having trouble expressing experience in verbal form
or avoiding such expression. They may be seen as gestures in verbal form, locatable
somewhere between vocalization and verbalization. These five items account for about 2 -
3% of spoken language in texts studied thus far.

The WRAD differs from other computer dictionaries in general use today in that it is
a measure of language style rather than content, and it is derived empirically by modeling the
RA scale ratings, rather than developed conceptually based on selection of content words.
The Reflection and Disfluency dictionaries have been constructed using standard procedures
for computerized content analysis; these involve compiling word lists from a large source of
texts, and selecting items based on agreement among judges following the conceptual
definitions of the dictionary contents. Because the measures of the dictionaries are
computerized, there is no question of inter-rater reliability. (For further details of the
development of the DAAP, see Bucci & Maskit, 2005, 2007.)
Narrative Analysis

The DAAP reads a text and, for each turn of speech or other unit, creates a smooth graph reflecting the density of matches for each dictionary; for a weighted dictionary, such as the WRAD, the graph reflects the density of the weights. Along with the graph, the program reproduces the text with markers inserted every 10 words so that one can compare the graph with the text. The DAAP also produces certain numerical measures based on the dictionaries. There are several measures for each dictionary; these are computed for each turn of speech and for each speaker for the text as a whole. There are also binary measures, the covariations, produced for each pair of dictionaries; the covariations are also produced for each turn of speech and for each speaker for the text as a whole.

The three phases of the referential process (arousal, symbolizing in narrative, and reflection) can be represented in terms of the relative strengths of the WRAD, DF and REF dictionaries. In the *arousal phase*, DF is relatively high, and WRAD and REF are relatively low. The speaker has not yet connected to relevant imagery or experience in symbolic form that can be expressed verbally. This phase is also marked by relatively slower word production. In the *symbolizing through narrative phase*, WRAD is relatively high, and DF and REF are relatively low. The speaker is immersed in the story, telling it fluently, and not yet reflecting on it. In the *reflection phase*, REF is relatively high, and WRAD is relatively low. DF is also expected to be on the high side, but not very high; low DF (high fluency) in this phase might indicate the reiteration of previously formulated material, rather than the search for new material.
Based on studies in which the DAAP was used to investigate the process of psychotherapy sessions (e.g., Bucci, 1994, 1997; Fertuck, Bucci, Blatt, & Ford, 2004), I expected that interviews in which the speaker generates new meanings and insights regarding the process of professional development would be characterized by relatively well-organized appearances and iteration of the phases of the referential process; in less effective work, the process would not play out, or would play out only partially. Each shift or reconstruction of an activated emotion schema would potentially enable access to deeper levels of affect and imagery, including experience that has been dissociated. Specifically, I expected that in meaning-generating interviews the speaker would spend more time in the symbolizing through narrative phase, and would do so more effectively. The speaker also would spend fewer words in the arousal phase, and would more clearly separate the narrative and reflection phases.

These expectations led to the following specific predictions for interviews in which the speaker was connected to the story and generated new meanings:

- The mean WRAD score would be higher
- The mean high WRAD would be higher
- The mean DF score would be lower
- The WRAD-REF covariation would be more highly negative (it is usually negative)
- The WRAD-DF covariation would be more highly negative
- The DF-REF covariation would be more highly positive

My intention in using the DAAP was to explore the process of identity formation from a different perspective than that which the analysis of narrative would allow. The DAAP allows access to qualities of storytelling. Since I think of identity as recreated in
social interaction (in this study, in the social context of interview) through complex processes involving language, it made sense to me that the ways in which people engaged in this process of narrating would offer interesting insights about identity formation processes. I was hoping to explore the relationships between different patterns of story-telling as assessed by the DAAP to different ways of identity formation that would emerge out of the analysis of narratives. Since my approach to the analysis of narratives was exploratory I made general hypotheses. I predicted that attempts to manage multiple identifications would be associated with more meaning-making during the interview. In contrast, I hypothesized that configurations that were based on limited choice and rejection of competing identifications would be associated with lower levels of meaning-making.

As the analysis of narrative progressed and my ideas began to take shape, it became apparent that there was not a clear and simple way to relate my constructs to the kind of findings that the DAAP generates. While I still think this is a viable and fascinating project, it would be a complex and demanding one. Given the comprehensiveness of my study as it was, it did not make sense to add this piece within the framework of a dissertation.
APPENDIX B: BACKGROUND INFORMATION QUESTIONNAIRE

The Questionnaire

Background Information

1. Age __________  2. Gender: ___ F   ___ M   ___ Other (please specify) _____________________

3. Marital status (mark all that applies):
   ___ Single   ___ Married   ___ Separated   ___ Divorced   ___ Living with a partner

   ___ Other (please specify) ________________________________

5. Is English your first language?   ___ Yes   ___ No

6. Was Psychology your college major?   ___ Yes   ___ No

7. In what program are you enrolled?   ___ Clinical Psychology   ___ Counseling Psychology
   ___ School Psychology   ___ Other (please specify) ________________________________

8. Location of program: City _____________________________ State ____________________________

9. What is your degree (mark all that applies)?   ___ Master degree   ___ PhD degree   ___ PsyD degree
   ___ Working towards a Master degree   ___ Working towards a PhD degree   ___ Working towards a PsyD degree   ___ Other (please specify)

   __________________________________________
10. How long have you been practicing therapy? _______ Years _______ Months

11. Approximately, how many therapy clients have you had?

___ None ___ 1-5 ___ 6-10 ___ 10-20 ___ 20-30 ___ 30+

12. What is your theoretical orientation? Please mark all that is relevant and rank it according to level of influence (1=highest):

___ Analytic-dynamic ___ Cognitive ___ Behavioral ___ Cognitive-Behavioral ___ Humanistic ___ Systemic ___ Other (please specify)

___________________________________________________

13. What is the primary orientation of your training program?

___ Analytic-dynamic ___ Cognitive ___ Behavioral ___ Cognitive-Behavioral ___ Humanistic ___ Systemic ___ Other (please specify)

___________________________________________________

14. How would you describe your theoretical orientation (mark all that applies)?

___ Eclectic ___ Integrative ___ Adherence to a single theoretical perspective ___ Adherence to a main theoretical perspective with other influences ___ No adherence to any theoretical perspective

15. Are you currently in therapy? ___ Yes ___ No

16. Have you ever been in therapy? ___ Yes ___ No

17. If yes, how long have you been in therapy in total? ______ Years ______ Months

18. What is the profession of your most recent psychotherapist? ___ Psychologist ___ Psychiatrist ___ Social Worker ___ Other ___ I don’t know
19. What is the theoretical orientation of your most recent psychotherapist?

_______________________________________________________________________

20. Is there someone close to you who is a mental health practitioner?  ___Yes  ___No

21. If yes, what is this person’s relationship to you?

_______________________________________________________________________

22. At what stage are you in your training? Please mark all that applies and rank them according to amount of time devoted to each task (1=highest)

___ Taking classes  ___ Working on dissertation  ___ Clinical practicum  ___ Internship

___ Finished internship  ___ Looking for a job/post-doc  ___ Working in a clinical position

___ Working in a non-clinical position  ___ Working in an academic position

___ Other (please specify) _____________________________________________________

23. If you applied for internship, did you use the APPIC process?  ___Yes  ___No

24. During your training, have you participated in an experientially-focused group dynamic class?  ___Yes  ___No

25. If yes, for how long?  _______ Years  _______ Months

26. To what extent has your program of training provided you with opportunities to think and talk about your professional development and identity as a psychotherapist?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Not at all  Plenty of opportunities
27. To what extent have you used therapy to discuss issues related to your professional identity?

Not at all                                                                                                     Many times

Thank you for your participation!

Explication of the Rationale behind Specific Items

In general, given my exploratory approach, I attempted to collect various data that have the potential of being of interest following the analysis of the narratives. Most of these data were not investigated systematically.

❖ Items 1 to 4 include standard demographic data.

❖ Item 5: Since the data of this study were textual data and especially given my initial intention to perform a linguistic analysis using the DAAP, I wanted to be able to take into account whether participants were communicating in their native language or not (five participants [17.2%] reported English as a second language). I did not integrate this information in any direct and formal way.

❖ Item 6: I inquired about whether psychology was participants’ major in college for several reasons. It was a way to get some kind of baseline in terms of the academic background of participants. I also wanted to touch on how early this decision was made and whether it was a later choice. I had the sense that a relatively large percentage of individuals in this profession arrives to it after making a previous
choice. This certainly emerged in the narratives, with many participants reporting changing majors or professions to psychology.

- Items 7-8, 13: These items provide contextual information regarding the type of program in which participants were enrolled (i.e., clinical psychology, counseling psychology, school psychology or other), its location, and its theoretical orientation. I was interested in these data to get a sense of the different variations within my sample pertaining to the training program, which could potentially impact how individuals go about developing an identity. I was also interested in the relationships among these three aspects: type of program, program’s location, and program’s theoretical orientation. These relations were not investigated systematically.

- Items 9-11, 22: These items were intended to touch on participants’ developmental stage, attempting to capture it in different ways: degree achieved, clinical experience in terms of years and number of clients, and specific trajectories often involved in doctoral training (e.g., coursework, internship, working in an academic or clinical position).

- Items 12-14 concern the theoretical orientation of participants and of their training program. I was interested in whether participants’ theoretical orientation would resemble that of their training program. I asked participants to define their theoretical approach both in terms of specific treatment paradigms (e.g., cognitive-behavioral, psychodynamic) and its “structure” (e.g., primary identification, integrative). In order to capture the complexity of this subject, participants were not limited to one response. I decided to include these items in addition to addressing this issue in the interview (i.e., asking participants about their theoretical orientation) since the
questionnaire format allows for more consistency and standardization in terms of response format. For instance, in the interview, several participants provided quite ambiguous responses to this question that could not be classified to any of the questionnaire response options.

- Viewing personal therapy as considerably important in shaping one’s professional identity, items 15-19 were intended to provide a sense of the extent of participants’ experience in personal psychotherapy and the possible impact of their psychotherapist’s theoretical orientation on their own theoretical identification.

- Similarly, items 20-21 explore other potential influences in one’s life with regard to professional development. The underlying notion was that exposure to the profession through a close tie may predispose individuals in this professional direction or impact their journey in particular ways. This direction was not pursued beyond what emerged organically in the interview.

- Item 23 asks about whether participants, if applied for internship, had used the APPIC process. The APPIC application process involves writing about professional development issues, including an autobiographical account and theoretical orientation, and extensive interviewing often touching on similar topics. Thus I wanted to be able to account for such prior experience, which may impact how one thinks and speaks about these issues.

- Similarly, items 24-25 look at whether participants have been involved and the extent of their involvement in a process group. This was thought to potentially be related to whether participants had had the experience of discussing professional development issues or more generally of reflecting with others about their experience.
Finally, items 26-27 touch directly on the extent to which training programs provide participants with opportunities to discuss professional issues and to what extent they do so in their personal therapy. Comparing the two was also of interest to me as it touches on the gap between what is given (by the training program) and what one needs (as reflected in one’s personal therapy). Of course, the two are interrelated, as opportunities to discuss professional issues in their program may create less need to do so in therapy.
During the research proposal meeting, it was suggested by one of the committee members to include, in addition to the background questionnaire, an objective measure of identity. The rationale was that the inclusion of a questionnaire would not be a great additional demand from participants and may prove to be illuminating in the data analysis phase. Specifically, a mixed method design would allow for an interesting exploration of the construct of identity from different perspectives. I was fascinated by this idea of looking at the interrelations between different conceptualizations of identity; between different worldviews.

The questionnaire I included, the EIPQ (Balistreri, Busch-Rossnagel, & Geisinger, 1995), is a self-report identity inventory consisting of 32 items, which assesses the dimensions of exploration and commitment in identity formation (i.e., the extent to which individuals explore different alternatives and identifications and commit to them, respectively) in the ideological (i.e., politics, religion, occupation, value-orientation) and interpersonal (i.e., friendship, family, intimate relationships, sex roles) domains (the EIPQ is attached at the end of this Appendix). This questionnaire is based on Erikson’s (1964) concept of personal identity and Marcia’s (1966) well-researched operationalization of the construct in terms of two conceptual dimensions: crisis/exploration and commitment. Marcia’s work was described in the Literature Review chapter and will be reviewed briefly here.

Using a quantitative-statistical methodology, Marcia created an identity-status paradigm that stresses the centrality of individual choice-making in forming an identity. The
paradigm’s central concepts, identity statuses, are based on cross-tabulation of two assumedly independent dimensions of exploration and commitment, extracted from Erikson’s theory. Exploration refers to the process of sorting through multiple alternatives, whereas commitment is the act of choosing one or more alternatives and following them. Commitment provides the person with a sense of purpose and continuity and alleviates identity confusion. This cross-tabulation of high and low levels of commitment and exploration identifies four identity statuses, suggesting different character types: Identity diffusion (low exploration, low commitment), identity foreclosure (low exploration, high commitment), identity moratorium (high exploration, low commitment), and identity achievement (high exploration, high commitment). The identity statuses are assumed to describe the individual’s identity both at the overall personality level and within any number of content areas known as domains. Since Marcia’s work is well established, producing an impressive body of empirical work (see Schwartz, 2001, for a review), I looked for questionnaires that are based on his work. I chose the EIPQ because it produces separate, continuous exploration and commitment scores, offering superior sensitivity than dichotomous scales. With cross-tabulation of low and high scores of exploration and commitments scales, the categories of identity-statues could be produced as well.

As noted, I decided not to pursue this additional project for several reasons. The EIPQ includes the domains of ideology and relationship and does not refer to professional identity. Since I could not find a questionnaire that measures psychotherapists’ professional identity, my original intention in including the EIPQ was to possibly explore relationship between the domains covered by the EIPQ and psychotherapist’ professional identity as I assess it. However, as I was exploring possibilities to investigate the relationships between the
findings from the EIPQ and from my narrative analysis, I realized that the divide between the different conceptualizations and research approaches was too big to bridge in a meaningful way in the context of my study. Furthermore, while I could classify participants based on my qualitative analysis to distinct four categories, each representing a particular identity configuration (i.e., open to experience, structure-reliant, meaning-maker, reactive) due to the limited size of my sample ($N = 29$) and given that the structure-reliant category had five participants, a statistical analysis of the relationships between the identity configurations and the EIPQ’s scores was not viable. Most importantly, though, following the narrative analysis, engaging with the narratives for almost two years, and being confronted again and again by the complexity and richness of the subject, I have come to doubt the meaningfulness of the EIPQ in the context of the questions I have been investigating. I think it is very difficult for a self-report questionnaire to be able to touch on such a complex issue as identity. In my view, the EIPQ does not have such sensitivity and complexity. See the next page for a copy of the EIPQ.
Please read each statement and indicate to what degree it reflects your own thoughts and feelings by choosing one of the following responses:

1 = strongly disagree  
2 = disagree  
3 = slightly disagree  
4 = slightly agree  
5 = agree  
6 = strongly agree

If you are not single, you may ignore the starred items if they do not apply to you.

| Statement                                                                 | strongly disagree | strongly agree |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|               |
| 1. I have definitely decided on the occupation I want to pursue.          | 1 2 3 4 5 6       |               |
| 2. I don’t expect to change my political principles and ideals.           | 1 2 3 4 5 6       |               |
| 3. I have considered adopting different kinds of religious beliefs.       | 1 2 3 4 5 6       |               |
| 4. There has never been a need to question my values.                    | 1 2 3 4 5 6       |               |
| 5. I am very confident about what kinds of friends are best for me.       | 1 2 3 4 5 6       |               |
| 6. My ideas about men’s and women’s roles have never changed as I became older. | 1 2 3 4 5 6       |               |
| 7. I will always vote for the same political party.                      | 1 2 3 4 5 6       |               |
| 8. I have firmly held views concerning my role in my family.             | 1 2 3 4 5 6       |               |
| *9. I have engaged in several discussions concerning behaviors involved in dating relationships. | 1 2 3 4 5 6       |               |
| 10. I have considered different political views thoughtfully.            | 1 2 3 4 5 6       |               |
11. I have never questioned my views concerning what kind of friend is best for me.  
   strongly disagree: 1, 2, 3; strongly agree: 4, 5, 6

12. My values are likely to change in the future.  
   1, 2, 3; 4, 5, 6

13. When I talk to people about religion, I make sure to voice my opinion.  
   1, 2, 3; 4, 5, 6

14. I am not sure about what type of dating relationship is best for me.  
   *14. I am not sure about what type of dating relationship is best for me.

15. I have not felt the need to reflect upon the importance I place on my family.  
   1, 2, 3; 4, 5, 6

16. Regarding religion, my beliefs are likely to change in the near future.  
   1, 2, 3; 4, 5, 6

17. I have definite views regarding the ways in which men and women should behave.  
   1, 2, 3; 4, 5, 6

18. I have tried to learn about different occupational fields to find the best one for me.  
   1, 2, 3; 4, 5, 6

19. I have undergone several experiences that made me change my views on men’s and women’s roles.  
   1, 2, 3; 4, 5, 6

20. I have consistently re-examined many different values in order to find the ones which are best for me.  
   1, 2, 3; 4, 5, 6

   1, 2, 3; 4, 5, 6

22. I have questioned what kind of date is right for me.  
   1, 2, 3; 4, 5, 6

23. I am unlikely to alter my vocational goals.  
   1, 2, 3; 4, 5, 6

24. I have evaluated many ways in which I fit into my family structure.  
   1, 2, 3; 4, 5, 6

25. My ideas about men’s and women’s roles will never change.  
   1, 2, 3; 4, 5, 6

26. I have never questioned my political beliefs.  
   1, 2, 3; 4, 5, 6

27. I have had many experiences that led me to review the qualities that I would like my friends to have.  
   1, 2, 3; 4, 5, 6
28. I have discussed religious matters with a number of people who believe differently than I do.

29. I am not sure that the values I hold are right for me.

30. I have never questioned my occupational aspirations.

31. The extent to which I value my family is likely to change in the future.

*32. My beliefs about dating are firmly held.
APPENDIX D: A POSTMODERN READING OF ERIKSON’S THEORY

Despite its emphasis on sameness and continuity, Erikson’s theory is open to a more contemporary reading and can be seen as a forerunner of postmodern thinking (Schachter, 2005). Schachter suggests that Erikson’s theory contains many concepts that can be used constructively to meet postmodern challenges. One such aspect of the theory he explores is Erikson’s description of the intrapsychic processes whereby multiple identifications are transformed into a unified structure. In order to explain this transformation, Erikson (1968) introduced the concept of “configuration”:

Identity formation… arises from the selective repudiation and mutual assimilation of childhood identifications and their absorption in a new configuration. The final identity…includes all significant identifications, but it also alters them in order to make a unique and reasonably coherent whole of them… It is a configuration gradually integrating constitutional givens, idiosyncratic libidinal needs, favored capacities, significant identifications, effective defenses, successful sublimations, and consistent roles. (pp. 159-163)

Erikson uses the term “configuration” in order to bridge the gap between multiple identifications and a single identity. A configuration implies a single set of relations among many components, and thus identity formation can be seen as the evolving process of the ego to configure the relationship among childhood identifications. Schachter (2005) identifies in Erikson’s descriptions three different processes that are involved in the creation of a configuration: selective repudiation, mutual assimilation, and absorption in a new configuration. *Selective repudiation* refers to a process whereby certain identifications are rejected and/or suppressed. *Mutual assimilation* suggests a synthesizing process whereby two or more identifications are merged into one, without rejecting either. *Absorbing identifications in a configuration*, Schachter suggests, may point to a third process by which different identifications are kept separate but continue to exist side-by-side. None are
rejected; rather, they become organized and exist in a kind of dynamic balance. Schachter identifies the theoretical possibility that individuals may use these processes differentially, leading to different types of identity configurations that may include incoherent or contradictory structures in addition to coherent ones. This reading opens up the possibility of understanding Erikson’s notion of integrative identity not necessarily as consistent across time and place, but rather as a composite that allows for all identifications to exist in some dynamic balance, without rejecting or suppressing inconsistent identifications. In that respect, the hallmark of the mature adult may not be an identity based on continuity, but in fact one that allows expression for all aspects of self through different contexts and relationships.

I referred to Erikson’s concept of configuration and to the three processes that Schachter (2005) identifies in the proposal, originally phrasing the primary research questions in these terms as well. For elaboration of this issue, see the section of Evolution of Research Questions in the Conceptual Framework and Research Questions chapter and in Appendix A.
Subject: Request for research participants ($30)

Dear Director of Training:

My name is Liat Tsuman-Caspi, and I am a doctoral student in clinical psychology at Teachers College, Columbia University. I am working with Professor Barry Farber on my dissertation looking at the professional development of psychotherapist trainees. I am writing to request your help in recruiting participants for my study. I would be grateful if you would forward this recruitment message to all of your doctoral students.

Thank you!

Sincerely,

Liat Tsuman-Caspi, M.S.

Teachers College, Columbia University
Dear graduate student,

You are invited to participate in a study about psychotherapist trainees’ professional development. The study seeks to examine psychotherapist trainees’ unique experiences of becoming a psychotherapist. It consists of an open-ended interview that includes five questions concerning your experience of professional development, followed by two short questionnaires. The entire procedure should take approximately an hour to an hour and a half. The interview will be audio-taped and transcribed for analysis. In return for your participation, you will receive $30 and, if you wish, the transcript of your interview once it is transcribed. There are no known risks to this study. It is our hope that findings from this study will be of benefit in understanding the challenges and trajectories involved in the beginning phase of psychotherapists’ career development and the ways in which training schools can better meet trainees’ needs. Those who have participated so far have reported enjoying the experience of speaking about and reflecting on their professional development.

To ensure confidentiality, your name will not appear on any materials connected with this study, with the exception of the consent form. The consent form and the personal information you provide will be kept separate from the recorded interview and transcript, such that the people who code your transcript will not have access to any identifying information.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. If you wish to participate or have any questions about the study, please contact Liat Tsuman-Caspi at lt2043@columbia.edu, or (212) 579-9085.

Sincerely,

Liat Tsuman-Caspi, M.S.

Teachers College, Columbia University
Participate in a Study about Psychotherapists’ Professional Development and Earn $30

Dear Clinical/Counseling Psychology Student,

You are invited to participate in a study about psychotherapist trainees’ professional development. The study seeks to examine psychotherapist trainees’ unique experiences of becoming a psychotherapist. It consists of an open-ended interview that includes five questions concerning your experience of professional development, followed by two short questionnaires. The entire procedure should take approximately an hour to an hour and a half. The interview will be audio-taped and transcribed for analysis. In return to your participation, you will receive $30 and, if you wish, the transcript of your interview once it is transcribed. There are no known risks to this study.

It is our hope that findings from this study will be of benefit in understanding the challenges and trajectories involved in the beginning phase of psychotherapists’ career development and the ways in which training schools can better meet trainees’ needs. Those who have participated so far have reported enjoying the experience of speaking about and reflecting on their professional development.

Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. If you wish to participate or have any questions about the study, please contact Liat Tsuman-Caspi at lt2043@columbia.edu or (212) 579-9085.
APPENDIX G: INFORMED CONSENT

Teachers College, Columbia University

INFORMED CONSENT

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH: You are invited to participate in a study on novice psychotherapists’ professional development. The study seeks to examine novice psychotherapists’ unique experiences of becoming a psychotherapist. Research has shown that psychotherapists’ early professional development and training experience have important implications for their clinical work, engagement with theory, and continued professional development. The study consists of an open-ended interview that includes five questions concerning your experience of professional development followed by two pages of background information and a short questionnaire. The interview will be audio-recorded and later transcribed for analysis. The interview will be conducted at a designated classroom in Teachers College or any other quiet pre-determined place that is convenient for you. It is our hope that findings from this study will be of benefit in understanding the challenges and trajectories involved in the beginning phase of psychotherapists’ career development and the ways training schools can better meet trainees’ needs.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: Potential risks are no greater than those encountered during a typical interviewing activity. You will receive $30 for your investment of time and energy. Furthermore, your participation will help guide future research on psychotherapists’ professional development and, through it, contribute to the improvement of the educational programs of psychotherapists.

DATA STORAGE TO PROTECT CONFIDENTIALITY: To ensure confidentiality, your name will not appear on any material connected with this study, with the exception of this consent form. The material that you provide will be assigned a numerical code and will be kept in a locked file cabinet. The consent form, the background information you provide and the questionnaire will be kept separate from the recorded interview and transcript, such that the people who code your transcript will not have access to any identifying information about you.

TIME INVOLVEMENT: Your participation will take approximately an hour to an hour and a half.

HOW WILL RESULTS BE USED: The results of the study will be used for the principal investigator’s dissertation and published in relevant professional journals.
Teachers College, Columbia University

PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS

Principal Investigator: Liat Tsuman-Caspi, M.S.

Research Title: Professional Development of Psychotherapist Trainees in Contemporary Culture

- I have read and discussed the Research Description with the researcher. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the purposes and procedures regarding this study.
- My participation in research is voluntary. I may refuse to participate or withdraw from participation at any time without jeopardy to future medical care, employment, student status or other entitlements.
- The researcher may withdraw me from the research at his/her professional discretion.
- If, during the course of the study, significant new information that has been developed becomes available which may relate to my willingness to continue to participate, the investigator will provide this information to me.
- Any information derived from the research project that personally identifies me will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without my separate consent, except as specifically required by law.
- If at any time I have any questions regarding the research or my participation, I can contact the investigator, Liat Tsuman-Caspi, lt2043@columbia.edu, (212) 579-9085 or Professor Barry Farber, farber@exchange.tc.columbia.edu, (212) 678-3267, who will answer my questions.
- If at any time I have comments, or concerns regarding the conduct of the research or questions about my rights as a research subject, I should contact the Teachers College, Columbia University Institutional Review Board /IRB. The phone number for the IRB is (212) 678-4105. Or, I can write to the IRB at Teachers College, Columbia University, 525 W. 120th Street, New York, NY, 10027, Box 151.
- I should receive a copy of the Research Description and this Participant's Rights document.
- If video and/or audio taping is part of this research, I ( ) consent to be audio/video taped. I ( ) do NOT consent to being video/audio taped. The written, video and/or audio taped materials will be viewed only by the principal investigator and members of the research team.
- My signature means that I agree to participate in this study.

Participant's signature: ________________________________ Date: ___/___/____

Name: ________________________________
If you would like a summary of the findings of the study when they are available, please print your name and address below.

______________________________________________________________________
Transcription Guidelines

The following transcription guidelines are very important since the transcribed texts will be analyzed by a linguistic software that works according to specific rules. Please learn these rules and apply them carefully.

1. **Word Processing Format.** Do not use any of the typography or formatting tools of your word processor, such as bold, italics, justification, etc.

Some word processors break words and insert hyphens. Make sure your word processor does not do this.

2. **Verbatim transcription.** Transcribe every expression of speech, including “hm” and “Um”. “hm” and “Um” are transcribed as mm.

3. **Speaker designators:** Each time there is a change of speaker, **start a new line after a blank line.**

   The interviewee is speaker 1 and the interviewer is speaker 2. If the new speaker is speaker 1, start this new line with the speaker designator:
   \s 1
   If the next speaker is speaker 2, start this new line with \s 2 ; etc.

   **Note that there is no space before the backslash, and that there are spaces both before and after the numbers; these are important.**

   There is a special rule for turns of speech with no content, such as the case of a speaker who is interrupted by someone else coughing, or laughing, or saying just some non-word, such as “hm” or “um hmm”. In these cases, and in these cases only, start a new line and, if for example, the interruption consists of speaker 2 saying “hm”, type:
   \st  2 mm.

   (Again, note that the backslash occurs at the beginning of a line, and that there are spaces both before and after the speaker number.)

4. **Sounds other than spoken words.** Events, or sounds other than words, should be noted in parentheses, as in (laughs), (coughs), or (telephone rings), etc.

5. **Backslashes.** The backslash may only be used as indicated above. It must always be the first character of the line it is on.

6. **Rules for words.** The following are intended to standardize the decisions that the transcriber will need to make. NOTE: These rules do not apply to items in parentheses, as the program ignores all items included in parentheses (round brackets).
• **Compound words.** Write compound words such as "self_sacrificing" using the underscore, rather than the hyphen.

• **Incomplete words.** Denote an incomplete word by ending it with exactly one hyphen. For example, if the speaker stutters and says: "f f fail"; this should be transcribed as "f- f-fail"; **note the spaces after the hyphens.** If the speaker starts a word, hesitates, and then either completes the word or says another word, type the first partial word with a hyphen at the end, followed by a space. For example if the speaker says "some", then hesitates, then says "somewhat", transcribe it as "some- somewhat".

If at all possible, do not use hyphens for any other purpose.

• **Unclear words.** These are noted in parentheses; if the speaker says "the" followed by one or more unclear words, type "the (unclear)". It is not necessary to try to preserve the number of unclear words.

• **Misspoken words.** If the speaker misspeaks, or if you hear the speaker as misspeaking, and there is no doubt as to the correct meaning, type the correct word. For example, if the speaker says something that sounds like, “I want to Philadelphia yesterday, and walked on Market Street”, this is clearly a misspeaking, and the correct word is “went”, rather than “want”, so the transcription should read, “I went (want) to Philadelphia …”.

• **Apostrophes.** Use apostrophes as usual for contractions, such as "don't", "can't", "I'd", and for possessives. However, type “o_clock” rather than “o’clock”, as this is really one word.

• **Filled pauses.** Sounds that have no meaning, such as “um”, should always be written as “mm”. If there is any reason to attempt to preserve the original sound more specifically, one can type the phonetics in parentheses, such as, “mm (um)”, or “mm (hm)”. Note that “oh”, “ah”, and “mm_hmm” are words; the usual sounds in the “MM” category are: “um”, “hm”, “uh”, “uhm”, etc.

• **Numbers.** Numbers in the text should be written out; that is, type “seven”, rather than “7”. For time, type “eight_forty_five” rather than “8:45”. Even large numbers should be written out using underscores; for example: “twenty_four_hundred_fifty_three”. Of course, speaker indicators must be digits (1,2, etc.)

7. **Punctuation Marks.** Use punctuation marks, such as commas, periods (full stops), semicolons, exclamation points and question marks as in customary usage. They do not matter for the program, but can be used to make the text more readable.

8. **Abbreviations.** Some standard abbreviations are usually written with periods, such as “a.m.”, while others, such as “S.U.N.Y”, are sometimes written with periods and sometimes without. Do not use periods, but rather type, for example, “am”, and “SUNY,”
9. **Pauses.** Write in parentheses the length of pause in seconds (Microsoft media player, for example, tracks the time that elapses).
APPENDIX I: CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Confidentiality Statement

As a research assistant working in a research project titled “Psychotherapist Trainees’ Professional Development in Contemporary Culture” I understand that my work will involve access to recorded information that is considered confidential.

I acknowledge my responsibility to respect the confidentiality of the research participants, to follow guidelines of confidentiality and to act in a professional manner.

I further understand that if I am found acting indiscreet with confidential material or not protecting the privacy of the research participants through my actions, I will be dismissed from my job immediately. I understand this action to be necessary in order to maintain high professional standards of the research project and researchers involved.

_____________________________                         ___________________________
Principal Researcher                                                           Research Assistant
Name and signature                                                           Name and signature

___________________  ______________________
Date                                                                              Date
APPENDIX J: INDUCTIVE ANALYSIS: TRAINEES’ PERCEIVED CHALLENGES AND TRAINING EXPERIENCE

As noted in the Results chapter, in addition to the analysis of the narratives as a whole, two interview questions, one addressing current challenges with respect to professional development and the other involving trainees’ subjective assessment of training, were analyzed inductively (i.e., a modified version of grounded theory [Strauss & Corbin, 1998a, 1998b]). That is, participants’ responses to these questions were read separately for the identification of central themes. Identified themes were labeled and grouped into categories and sub-categories through a back-and-forth process between data and categories. In contrast to the analysis of narratives that was focused on both the manifest and latent meanings conveyed by participants’ accounts, the inductive analysis was limited to the narratives’ manifest content, the “surface structure present in the message” (Berg, 2004, p. 269).

Identified categories and sub-categories were counted according to the number of participants who reported them rather than the overall number of times they were mentioned in the narratives.‡ Findings are reported for the entire sample according to stage in training, looking at beginner trainees (i.e., coursework phases, 1st-3rd years) and advanced trainees (i.e., post-coursework phase, 4th-7th years). It should be noted that the majority of the sample (20, 69.0%) are advanced trainees. Accordingly, when I discuss the findings in terms of

‡ Throughout the analysis, I have included and worked with all the different responses participants reported. Only at the end of the analysis, when I finalized the different categories and sub-categories and examined their prevalence in the data, I considered different responses, which were by the same participant and reflected the same category, as one item. For instance, if a participant discussed two issues in response to the question of current challenges (e.g., two different challenges with regard to psychotherapy work) that both reflected the same category (e.g., ambiguity in psychotherapy work), I counted them as one item under the sub-category of ambiguity in psychotherapy work. My rationale was that the prevalence in which I am interested is that of the categories identified in the sample (i.e., what percentage of participants in the sample report a specific category?). Thus, while a participant might address this category (e.g., ambiguity in psychotherapy work) in different ways, it would still be counted as one item.
training stage, I use percentiles, computing the percentage of participants reporting a certain category out of the total participants in a *particular training stage* rather than the overall sample. For instance, if a certain category is reported by 10 out of 20 advanced trainees, I will state that 50% of advanced trainees, rather than 34.5% of participants, belong to this category.\textsuperscript{183} Given the relatively small sample size ($N = 29$), and the fact that only nine participants (31.0%) are beginner trainees, statements about prevalence, especially with respect to training stage, are tentative and impressionistic in nature.

Current Challenges with Respect to Professional Development

The interview question concerning trainees’ current challenges was formulated as follows: “Please tell me about the challenges and concerns you are currently dealing with on your way to becoming a professional and how you are dealing with these challenges.” The inductive analysis was applied only to the part of the narrative directly addressing the challenges\textsuperscript{184}; nevertheless, analysis was done in the context of familiarity with each narrative as a whole.\textsuperscript{185}

For each interview, reported challenges were identified. Most relevant passages of the text were copied and pasted and tentatively categorized. At this stage, my focus in categorizing was on remaining as close as possible to participants’ subjective experience, at times using participants’ own words. I also attempted to exhaust interpretive possibilities,

\textsuperscript{183} Because advanced trainees constitute two thirds of the sample, it does not make sense to compare them to beginner trainees based on frequency. Five advanced trainees (out of 20) reporting a specific challenge is not the same in terms of prevalence as five beginner trainees (out of nine) reporting the same challenge.

\textsuperscript{184} The second part of the question, about ways of coping with challenges, was included with the aim of probing the extent to which trainees processed and reflected on their experience in different, formal and informal, forums. I also reasoned that the ways in which trainees cope with developmental challenges may illuminate some aspects of how they go about developing their sense of self.

\textsuperscript{185} Inductive analysis was carried out during the middle stages of narrative analysis when I was already working with the entire data set. My ideas at this stage were still evolving. I address the issue of possible influence of the two types of analysis on each other later in this section.
often using several categories for one reported challenge. Often, participants stated a primary challenge (e.g., financial difficulties), but described different aspects of this challenge (e.g., concrete concerns about supporting oneself, a sense of mismatch between one’s educational level and financial status, and the need to balance different needs, such as livelihood, professional development, and self-care). In these cases, I created several categories, which later usually became sub-categories under a more general category. This initial analysis was done for the entire data set for each participant separately.

Following the initial categorization of all 29 participants’ responses, I began the process of identifying categories and sub-categories across participants. This involved a long process of going back and forth between the preliminary categories and the data, across different participants, striving to create categories that would be as representative and reflective of participants’ own accounts as possible. I created a list of the evolving categories, placing similar or overlapping categories next to each other, and went back to the data to determine whether such categories could be collapsed into broader categories or in fact represented distinct ideas. This phase involved a reiterative process of grouping and regrouping categories, attempting to arrive at the most succinct and exhaustive, yet accurate, representation of participants’ responses.

As a result of this process I identified six over-arching categories, each including several sub-categories: professional development (65.5% of participants in the sample referred to challenges in this area), psychotherapy work (44.8%), training (44.8%), finance (24.1%), dissertation (20.7%), and transition to adulthood (6.9%).\(^{186}\) Table 3 summarizes the

\(^{186}\) The percentages refer to the number of participants out of the 29 who reported a particular challenge. Since participants sometimes reported more than one challenge, percentages do not add up to 100%. Thus, the percentages reflect the relative prevalence of a specific area of challenge compared to other areas of challenge reported by participants.
list of categories and sub-categories and their prevalence in the sample as a whole and according to developmental stage. Table 4 presents the categories and sub-categories with examples from the narratives.

Table 3

Frequencies and Percentiles of Reported Current Challenges and Concerns among Participants across and within Training Stages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges and Concerns</th>
<th>Overall sample (N = 29)</th>
<th>Coursework Stage a (n = 9)</th>
<th>Post Coursework Stage b (n = 20)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional development</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming a professional</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-definition</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In dialogue/interaction with the professional field</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balancing professional and personal aspects of self</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The unknown nature of professional future</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychotherapy work</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demanding, complex, and ambiguous nature of psychotherapy work</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations of the impact of psychotherapy/psychotherapists</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiating boundaries of responsibility and emotional involvement</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 (continued)

Frequencies and Percentiles of Reported Current Challenges and Concerns among Participants across and within Training Stages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges and Concerns</th>
<th>Overall sample (N = 29)</th>
<th>Coursework Stage (^a) (n = 9)</th>
<th>Post Coursework Stage (^b) (n = 20)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>( n )</td>
<td>% (^c)</td>
<td>( n )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achieving professional milestones</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>66.7</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific limitations of one’s program</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The long, demanding, and uncertain nature of training</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrying debt</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting oneself through school</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balancing working and other personal needs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mismatch between financial status and developmental stage</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty of future livelihood</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissertation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiations with advisor and committee</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambiguous nature of the dissertation process</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation involved in dissertation work</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition to adulthood</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note. As noted previously, the \( n \) for the sub-categories represents the number of participants who mentioned this particular challenge or concern. Within a category each participant is counted once even if he or she reported more than one concern in that area. However, the same participant can be counted once in each of the sub-categories under each general category. Thus, for example, if a participant stated two challenges under the general category of professional development, one concerning self-definition and another concerning becoming a professional, he or she will be counted once under the general category, and once for each of the sub-categories.

\(^a\) Trainees at 1\(^{st}\)-3\(^{rd}\) year in training. \(^b\) Trainees at 4\(^{th}\)-7\(^{th}\) year in training. \(^c\) Percentages out of the entire sample (\(N = 29\)). \(^d\) Percentages out of the participants at the coursework stage (\(n = 9\)). \(^e\) Percentages out of the participants at the post coursework stage (\(n = 20\)).

Table 4

**Summary of Trainees’ Reported Challenges and Concerns with Examples from the Narratives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges and Concerns</th>
<th>Examples from the Narratives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional development</strong></td>
<td><strong>(19, 65.5)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming a professional</td>
<td>(7, 24.1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Coming straight from undergrad and being mixed in with people who are like 40-year olds with kids and they’ve been doing clinical work for years is an interesting transition… ’cause I feel like you have to grow up really fast… And so that’s kind of been a challenge to be a little more professional because I’ve never really been in a professional environment.” (Beginner trainee)

“I’m really ending the phase of being a student… going into sort of a professional role where I’m going to be a supervisor, I’m going to be a professor… and as much as it excites me to be in a role of sort of like a mentor and a supervisor and all that, that comes with a lot of pressure and responsibility and expectations that I have for myself as well as from other people. And I’ve been very much sort of struggling with that.” (Advanced trainee)
Table 4 (continued)

Summary of Trainees’ Reported Challenges and Concerns with Examples from the Narratives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges and Concerns (n, %)</th>
<th>Examples from the Narratives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Becoming a professional (7, 24.1)</td>
<td>“Dressing professionally... that’s a big sign in our culture of being together and it’s like the first diagnostic step… that’s not effortless for me (laughs)... I feel pressure to be well-groomed... I feel the more well-dressed I am, the more competent I’ll be seen...” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Self-definition (6, 20.7) | “My biggest challenge is knowing where I want to go. And that’s the most frustrating thing for me. Knowing what I want to do in the future. Populations I want to work with, choosing a theoretical orientation… Nobody tells you how to do that… there is no class that says, ‘This is the best orientation,’ or if you’re this kind of person, you should use this orientation…” (Beginner trainee). |

| In dialogue/interaction with the professional field (6, 20.7) | “I think that I’m always just sort of thinking what do I want to do here? What am I willing to commit to? What am I not? I feel like I’m more than ever in the process of drawing boundaries for myself...” (Advanced trainee) |

| | “That is a separation individuation issue because... at the same time that you’re being taught by a supervisor, you’re also trying to form your own identity as a therapist, and I think that trying to separate what you’re comfortable with what the supervisor’s comfortable with... having room to do it your own way I think is something that’s been challenging with every supervisor.” (Advanced trainee) |

| | “I feel some frustration with our field, it kind of feel narrow in our field...there’s not enough discussion with...other ideas. I feel like it gets very insulated to the point of you look at some of these journals and they’re all writing about the exact same thing over and over and over again... and it just gets really boring...I need an injection of something new.” (Advanced trainee) |
### Table 4 (continued)

**Summary of Trainees’ Reported Challenges and Concerns with Examples from the Narratives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges and Concerns</th>
<th>Examples from the Narratives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>In dialogue/interaction with the professional field</td>
<td>[Referring to certain perspectives within psychoanalysis] “Orthodoxy is a cult. (laughs) Like this is a cult… I don’t know if I see myself as someone who belongs to the culture and makes changes in it or who will just sort of dismiss it and say like ‘you guys are crazy, I’m going to do my own thing.’ That’s like…a big thing for me.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balancing professional and personal aspects of self</td>
<td>“Balancing what’s going on in my life with my plans professionally, I guess as a woman… Like how do I balance my ambition and what I want to do and these opportunities that I have with a husband who has also career goals?” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The unknown nature of professional future</td>
<td>“In terms of career, this is a big unknown, so like where am I going?” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychotherapy work</td>
<td>“There’s always in a sense more work than you think (laughs) in a therapy. I think there’s always more stuff that’s there than meets the eye and I think that one of my challenges… I struggle sometimes to be like, what is it that’s right here, you know? ‘Cause you have to, you know, eventually find a way… you have to choose a way. You can’t just choose no way.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 (continued)

Summary of Trainees’ Reported Challenges and Concerns with Examples from the Narratives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges and Concerns</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demanding, complex, and ambiguous nature of psychotherapy work</td>
<td>“Sometimes like I said, there are times where you just don’t want to do it anymore, like when I have a long day and have a very challenging client, and you’re just like, I don’t want to do it anymore” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(9, 31.0)</td>
<td>“I would say being thrown a patient that I’ve never had any experience with… learning how to work with a new patient and all the challenges that they bring into the room with them [is a challenge].” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations of the impact of psychotherapy/psychotherapist</td>
<td>“I don’t feel that I have the really expertise yet to help somebody enough the way I would like to… but also part of it is because there is so much that we just don’t know in this field… sometimes I just feel, it’s not it’s not working enough.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5, 17.2)</td>
<td>“I think it’s been with me ever since I started, which does this work?… I often wonder how are we helping people… it’s that grappling with uncertainty.” (Beginner trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiating boundaries of responsibility and emotional involvement</td>
<td>“Like a biggest fear of mine is suicide. And it always has been. I mean it’s just very scary when a client brings it up… whenever it comes up in session now… you just constantly think about them and how they’re doing and you just hope that they’re not going to act on it. And you do all you can do, but sometimes it doesn’t feel like enough, it really doesn’t.” (Beginner trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3, 10.3)</td>
<td>“I think I’m getting better at it, but like I think there is definitely a part of me that I feel like anxious or upset if a patient didn’t show, like it was kind of like a reflection on me and my work or… if I felt like there was a setback in the therapy, it would hit me hard. I would be like upset about it.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 (continued)

Summary of Trainees’ Reported Challenges and Concerns with Examples from the Narratives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges and Concerns</th>
<th>Examples from the Narratives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Negotiating boundaries of responsibility and emotional involvement (3, 10.3)</td>
<td>“I’m going to be working with… sick children… That’s the population I think that can tear on my heart strings more than any other… and I think that’s going to be a big challenge… it will make the work more difficult… probably my worst nightmare is that I’ll just be really distraught and I’ll start crying and I won’t be able to pull myself together.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training (13, 44.8)</td>
<td>“Applying for my internship (laughs) and getting one… It’s just a very competitive process that I’m aware of and just going through that and being able to get one is a concern.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific limitations of one’s program (5, 17.2)</td>
<td>“There’s a huge lack of communication from the administration to the faculty and to the students… So… students turn to the faculty and faculty, you know, they don’t know what’s happening.” (Beginner trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The long, demanding, and uncertain nature of training (3, 10.3)</td>
<td>“It’s like always a big hump to go over. There’s always an obstacle. It’s like when does it end? It’s like your first year, I was just eased into it and that wasn’t too bad. But then it’s like the Master research… so that’s a hump, and then the cert exam and then the comps exam. It’s so much stress and I guess what I’ve learned over the years, being in school, it’s, okay, one day at a time.” (Beginner trainee)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 (continued)

Summary of Trainees’ Reported Challenges and Concerns with Examples from the Narratives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges and Concerns</th>
<th>Examples from the Narratives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The long, demanding, and uncertain nature of training (3, 10.3)</td>
<td>“You finish your dissertation, I’m like all excited I’m done and I’m not done. There’s more, more hard work, more sacrifice.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance (7, 24.1)</td>
<td>“I mean financially, it’s difficult…I see how many loans I have now and it just makes me sick… and I’m like how are we going to have a family? (laughs) Like that’s a mortgage.” (Beginner trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrying debt (3, 10.3)</td>
<td>“The first biggest challenge I’m dealing with is financial. And I’m dealing with it by taking loans from relatives and banks and not thinking about it. It is blocked right now. I panic and I tell myself it’s an investment, it’s an investment!” (Beginner trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting oneself through school (3, 10.3)</td>
<td>“Money. All about money. No one told me how hard it was going to be to make a living.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balancing working and other personal needs (3, 10.3)</td>
<td>“One of the biggest challenges that I’m facing is financial….I have to support myself and so in addition to this pre-doc…I have a second job in the evening, and next year I’m taking on a third job so that I can hopefully break even.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I’ve been trying to deal with it [scarce financial resources] by working more, which is not in line with what I tell my clients and with my general philosophy that it’s really important to have unscheduled free time for my own mental health… it’s really a conflict and a challenge to balance having a personal life and… additional employment.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“It’s hard as a 35-year-old woman who’s single to have to choose between making money and having a life.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 (continued)

Summary of Trainees’ Reported Challenges and Concerns with Examples from the Narratives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges and Concerns</th>
<th>Examples from the Narratives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mismatch between financial status and developmental stage</td>
<td>“I’m going to be 35 and I’m still living like a student…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2, 6.9)</td>
<td>I’m going to be all finished, have my PhD, I’m going to have another year where my salary is $43,000….it’s just not on par with my peers. My friends are all making at least double what I’m making and they’re not in debt.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncertainty of future livelihood</td>
<td>“I’m going to be 39… I cannot afford to do this for any longer, I literally can’t… I was naive in the sense that I had always assumed that if I was working, I would be getting paid… I’m not working for free this year, but just the responsibility that I have is so disproportionate with the reimbursement.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2, 6.9)</td>
<td>“How to find my way after I graduate, I mean how these skills are really going to translate into a livelihood.” (Beginner trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“How am I ever going to make any money and this is a really stupid job to be in (laughs) because I put in a lot of time and I’m not going to really see anything from it.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissertation (6, 20.7)</td>
<td>“Just getting through the whole dissertation process, that’s a challenge. Negotiating not only the work but also the relationship with advisor and committee… I think a lot of the dissertation is also not doing what you want but also doing what your advisor wants you to do and just being able to find a middle ground.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiations with advisor and committee</td>
<td>“The biggest challenge for me now is my dissertation and it’s almost taken on like comical proportions about what a pain in the ass it’s been to get through this process … A lot of revisions to drafts, things like, ‘Hey, you should put in more stuff here.’ And in the next draft, I put it in. He’s like, ‘This is just useless, take it out.’” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 (continued)

Summary of Trainees’ Reported Challenges and Concerns with Examples from the Narratives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenges and Concerns (n, %)</th>
<th>Examples from the Narratives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ambiguous nature of the dissertation process (4, 13.8)</td>
<td>“I still feel like I’m just like lost… like you have no idea when your thesis is done. It’s not like it ends at a certain semester and you get credit. It’s up to you, but it’s also not up to you…there’s a lot that goes into it, and then all the administrative stuff… it’s sometimes overwhelming.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“It’s sort of just a lot of my back and forth without, like if you write a paper for a class and it’s a B plus paper or an A minus paper, you’re done. Your draft, if it’s not what they think is an A… you gotta write it again. So the end point is less clear.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isolation involved in dissertation work (2, 6.9)</td>
<td>“A more concrete obstacle is that I’m currently working on my dissertation... that’s made me question how much I really want to be a researcher because there is a lot of isolation...most of the time I spend by myself and I think I definitely enjoy much more the interpersonal interaction.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“It’s lonely, it’s very lonely. And not only that, but you’re stuck in your own head, like your thesis is like, who are you going to talk to about it? Right? ... no one cares.” (Advanced trainee).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition to adulthood (2, 6.9)</td>
<td>“Another challenge I’m dealing with is being moved out because I’ve never lived on my own.” (Beginner trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I guess part of it is just growing up too and realizing like, wow, this is a lot of responsibility being an adult.” (Beginner trainee)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Following the inductive analysis, as I was summarizing its findings, I realized that most of the categories I had identified could also be expressed more broadly in terms of the constructs of differentiation and psychological separation. Since the inductive analysis was done during the middle stages of the narrative analysis, the question arises of whether the narrative analysis impacted the identification of categories in the inductive analysis. Given my attempt to remain as close to participants’ experience as possible and the fact that categories were formulated in terms of the lived experience of participants, I am confident that the two analyses did not impact one another in a systematic way. It was my experience that the two types of analyses involved different foci of attention and called upon different analytic skills. Specifically, in the analysis of the narratives, my focus at the time was on the back and forth between my evolving interpretations and the data, as I challenged and continuously revised my ideas to better reflect the data. It involved critical examination of my concepts, interpretive skills, and reorganization of ideas. In contrast, the inductive analysis was a more straightforward task, involving identification of themes and categorization (i.e., interpretation) at a more immediate, manifest level. Accordingly, the identification of the themes of differentiation and psychological separation in the final categories I identified reflect, I believe, the prevalence of these themes in the data, rather than the impact of the theory I have developed. The quotes presented in Table 4, illustrating the categories identified, may provide further support for the validity of the categories identified (i.e., support the argument that these categories are valid interpretations of participants’ responses rather than influenced by my evolving ideas at the time).
As noted above, 19 participants (65.5%) reported challenges in the area of professional development. This category refers to challenges and concerns that go beyond trainees’ clinical work, research, or coursework, focusing on issues related to trainees’ developmental process and professional identity. It includes challenges such as transitioning from being a student to being a professional, making decisions about what kind of psychotherapist one will be (e.g., developing a theoretical orientation or accepting a particular job), reconciling one’s professional needs and choices with the training environment and with other personal needs, and dealing with the ambiguous nature of one’s professional future. Of the 19 participants who reported challenges in the area of professional development, five were beginner trainees (62.5%) and 14 were advanced trainees (70%). The challenge of interacting with and finding one’s place within the broader professional field, not surprisingly, was present only for advanced trainees, reported by six participants (30% of advanced trainees).

Many of the challenges reported under the category of professional development can be conceptualized more broadly as challenges of psychological separation. That is, they concern the development of a subjective sense of self as a psychotherapist with which one is familiar and comfortable. For instance, participants described the difficulty involved in constantly changing professional roles (e.g., from student to supervisee to researcher to patient to supervisor); they are preoccupied with which clothes to wear, trying to convey confidence and professionalism as well as a personal touch; they struggle to feel part of the psychotherapy community while tolerating aspects of the field that feel incongruent or dissatisfying; and they try to figure out the ways in which they are similar to and, more importantly, different from peers and mentors.
Another prevalent theme, appearing in 44.8% (13) of participants’ accounts, is challenges involved in psychotherapy work. While this category can be thought of as an aspect of professional development, it touches on somewhat different issues. It refers to challenges involved in clinical work from the perspective of the psychotherapist. This is a more focused look, specific to the “business” of conducting psychotherapy, as opposed to the more general aspects concerning trainees’ professional development and sense of themselves as psychotherapists. This category includes coping with the demanding, complex, and ambiguous nature of psychotherapy work, recognizing the limitations of psychotherapy work, and negotiating the boundaries of the psychotherapist’s personal involvement and responsibility. As would be expected, these challenges were reported more frequently by trainees at the coursework stage (7, 77.8%) than by trainees at the post coursework stage who have more experience conducting psychotherapy (7, 35.0%). Here too, the theme of psychological separation is apparent; trainees struggle to find their therapeutic voice while negotiating the needs of patients and supervisors’ perspectives. They struggle with setting boundaries and separating from patients, and tolerating the limitations of their impact on patients’ lives. Touching on the issue of differentiation, trainees discussed the challenge of making treatment decisions while encountering various perspectives and interventions.

Of equal importance are challenges pertaining to training, reported by 13 participants (44.8%). The category of training refers to aspects that are characteristic of psychotherapy doctoral programs, such as the lengthy period of training, the combination of research and clinical work, the more specific qualities of participants’ particular training programs, and the typical professional trajectories involved in psychotherapy training (e.g., certification exam, pre-doctoral internship). The distribution of challenges according to developmental stage
suggests that novice trainees who are still attending courses and thus are in more daily contact with their programs pay more attention than advanced trainees (66.7% versus 35.0%) to specific challenges and limitations of their training program (e.g., quality of courses, program’s responsiveness to their needs). Conversely, advanced trainees were somewhat more engaged than beginners (25% versus 11.1%) in training issues pertaining to developmental milestones.

Challenges concerning trainees’ financial situations were reported by seven participants (24.1%). Concerns included having to carry a debt due to federal loans, struggling to support oneself during school, difficulty maintaining a balance between the need to support oneself and self-care, experiencing a mismatch between one’s developmental stage (e.g., professionally, age-wise) and financial status, and worries about future livelihood. These concerns, in addition to being real and objective, also reflect trainees’ uncertainty about their future and engagement in issues of identity, trying to negotiate their different self-experiences. Financial concerns were reported by participants at different stages of training.

Challenges pertaining to dissertation work were reported by six participants (20.7%). Touching on the theme of psychological separation, negotiations with advisor and committee members were experienced as the most challenging aspect of this process, reported by five of the six participants. The ambiguity of the dissertation process, such as the lack of structure characterizing research work or uncertainty about the endpoint, was discussed by four participants. The isolation involved in conducting research was reported as a challenge by two participants. Challenges in this area, as expected, were reported solely by advanced trainees (i.e., in their 4th-7th year) who are working on their dissertation and represent 30.0% of the advanced trainees participating in the study.
Finally, two participants (6.9%) reported challenges involved in the transition to adulthood, such as living independently and assuming adult responsibilities. The two participants were at the end of their first year of training and were dealing with the personal changes often accompanying the beginning of graduate school.

Summary and Discussion

Challenges concerning professional development were most prevalent, reported by 65.5% of participants. This number may be impacted by the phrasing of the interview question, which asked participants about current challenges and concerns they experience on their way to becoming a professional. However, the question is still open enough to allow different responses, and given that participants were asked about current challenges, it is likely that they discussed issues with which they were most engaged at the time.

Accordingly, the prevalence of challenges in the area of professional development across training stages potentially suggests the importance of engaging with trainees at all developmental levels in questions of professional development. Indeed, issues concerning the process of psychological separation—developing a sense of oneself as unique yet connected to other psychotherapists—appeared consistently in other areas of challenge.

Challenges in the areas of professional development and finance affected trainees at all stages of training. Trainees who were still in the coursework stage interacted with their training program and were impacted by them. Naturally they reported more challenges with respect to specific aspects of their training programs than advanced trainees, whose contact with their training program was limited. Similarly, having less clinical experience, challenges with respect to psychotherapy work were more prevalent among beginner trainees. Finally, as
would be expected, challenges involved in dissertation work were reported solely by advanced trainees.

Because of the small sample size, the trends noted are impressionistic in nature. Similarly, challenges in the areas of dissertation, finance, and transition to adulthood are reported by a relatively small number of participants (i.e., two to seven). However, their potential significance should not be discounted; their existence is meaningful and represents real concerns that potentially characterize many psychotherapist trainees.

Participants’ Assessment of Training

A second question I analyzed thematically was the final interview question addressing trainees’ subjective experience of their training. The inductive analysis of this question followed the same process as the inductive analysis of the challenges question described above. The question was phrased as follows: “In your training, what have you found most helpful in terms of your development, and what has been missing?” “What has been helpful” and “what has been missing” are two different ways of asking what trainees see as important in their training. While the former touches on aspects of training that have made the greatest impact, the later touches on aspects in which absence or insufficiency were felt by trainees. I will present each separately and later discuss them together. Table 5 summarizes the list of categories and subcategories and their prevalence in the sample as a whole and according to developmental stage. Table 6 presents the categories and subcategories with examples from the narratives.
Table 5

Trainees’ Assessment of Their Training – Frequencies and Percentiles across and within Training Stages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects of Training</th>
<th>Overall sample</th>
<th>Coursework Stage</th>
<th>Post Coursework Stage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$(N = 29)$</td>
<td>$(n = 9)$</td>
<td>$(n = 20)$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A personally involved holding (training) environment</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>72.4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical Supervision</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure to a <em>variety</em> of training experiences</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical experiences</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coursework and readings</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coursework</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readings</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being part of a professional community</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larger professional community</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical experience</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased self-awareness</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal therapy</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6.9</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5 (continued)

Trainees’ Assessment of Their Training – Frequency and Percentage Data across and within Training Stages

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects of Training</th>
<th>Overall sample (N = 29)</th>
<th>Coursework Stage(^a) (n = 9)</th>
<th>Post Coursework Stage(^b) (n = 20)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A personally involved holding (training) environment</td>
<td>n 51.7 (%^c)</td>
<td>n 55.6 (%^d)</td>
<td>n 50.0 (%^e)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coursework</td>
<td>7 24.1</td>
<td>2 22.2</td>
<td>5 25.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical supervision</td>
<td>5 17.2</td>
<td>1 11.1</td>
<td>4 20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure of training</td>
<td>3 10.3</td>
<td>1 11.1</td>
<td>2 10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall positive experience</td>
<td>6 20.7</td>
<td>2 22.2</td>
<td>4 20.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. The \(n\) for the sub-categories represents the number of participants who mentioned this particular aspect of training. Within a category each participant is counted once even if he or she reported more than one concern in that area. However, across sub-categories under each category participants can be counted more than once.

\(^a\) Trainees at 1\(^{st}\)-3\(^{rd}\) year in training. \(^b\) Trainees at 4\(^{th}\)-7\(^{th}\) year in training. \(^c\) Percentages out of the entire sample (\(N\) = 29). Percentages out of the participants at the coursework stage (\(n = 9\)). Percentages out of the participants at the post coursework stage (\(n = 20\)).
### Table 6

**Summary of Trainees’ Assessment of Training with Examples from the Narratives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helpful Aspects of Training</th>
<th>Examples from the Narratives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A personally involved holding (training) environment (21, 72.4)</td>
<td>“I have a great advisor. He’s so amazing, and what’s important to me… that people care about your personal life as well. So my advisor’s always asking me about my girlfriend and my family and me, how I’m doing… he makes that effort… and he’s just very appreciative of me… he’s just very warm and caring.” (Beginner trainee)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“My mentor… has been immeasurably helpful and actually seeing a trajectory of this is what my life could look like over time, building a practice… having someone I can really bounce off my questions, she’s been so generous in the amount of advice.” (Beginner trainee)

“Individual people along the way who took an interest in me, like my internship director. You meet your little teachers, they’re not just formal teachers, you meet your teachers in life… So I’ve met some of those along the way and they’ve been really helpful.” (Advanced trainee)

“The relationship I’ve had with the training director… he’s just always been a real big fan and supporter of mine in a way that’s felt really healthy and just like he doesn’t infantilize me, he’s always had a lot of faith in my ability to do things, which made me rise to the challenge and act like an adult… he knows to give a lot of compliments, and also not a lot of hand-holding. And it worked for me, it really worked.” (Advanced trainee)

“To a certain extent that the majority of professors at my school have been so hard on all of us… you almost feel like they’re just giving you a hard time… to some degree it’s disconcerting (laughs), but I think it probably helps me to even strive for more. So I think, you know, some of the being so tough on us has been helpful, although I think sometimes it makes you angry.” (Advanced trainee)

“Rich training environments… I’ve been lucky to have been… at places where there were strong training directors who sort of advocated for training needs in the face of clinic needs… I just think it’s important to have a training director who thinks developmentally.” (Advanced trainee)
## Table 6 (continued)

### Summary of Trainees’ Assessment of Training with Examples from the Narratives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helpful Aspects of Training</th>
<th>Examples from the Narratives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>A personally involved holding (training) environment</strong> (21, 72.4)</td>
<td>“And getting the encouragement, you know, you’re going to do okay, everybody’s really anxious about this and you’re not going to hurt your clients.” (Beginner trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“When it’s good supervision in parallel to what I hope to provide to my patients is a place where I feel held, I can explore my reactions and I feel safe enough that I can really wonder what it is that this work does, what works, what doesn’t work.” (Beginner trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Quality supervision is really important… human relationships, so you have to have human relationships in order to do it [psychotherapy]… you have to get empathy in order to provide empathy…and challenging… you need challenging supervisors.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clinical supervision</strong> (14, 48.3)</td>
<td>“The individual supervision… because we bring in our videotapes and we watch ourselves and we watch our clients… he’ll point out, all right, watch your body language here and, okay, and then actually talk about the clients and say, all right, well, you know, your client said this. This is really classic of someone who’s…it’s more of a hands-on experience.” (Beginner trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I’ve really found having a senior therapist whom I can go tell things about my client, to ask advice, who helps me get the correct words basically, help me, you know, come at this sentence that I can use… that’s very helpful.” (Beginner trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“I’ve had some supervisors who modeled a lot of what I could be doing as a therapist, so for my own supervisors to model how to talk about transference and counter-transference within our own supervisor relationship has been very helpful for me to apply to my clients.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 6 (continued)

**Summary of Trainees’ Assessment of Training with Examples from the Narratives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helpful Aspects of Training</th>
<th>Examples from the Narratives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clinical supervision</strong></td>
<td>(“Supervision has been the most helpful thing… for CBT, it is where I got my training until this year…I would say I had no formal CBT training until the internship. It was all through supervision.” (Advanced trainee))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(14, 48.3)</td>
<td>“I think I learned the most from talking about cases…and really what, in the moment, what do you do, and how do you formulate this case, how do you conceptualize it…what are the issues this person is encountering and how can we go about addressing them, helping them?…this is what happened, this is what he said, how do I respond. Let’s think about what the different ways could be and this is a comment that really threw me, I had no idea what to say…” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Exposure to a variety of training experiences</strong></td>
<td>(“It’s been helpful to have a lot of varied experiences in different settings, from a clinical standpoint… like just having experience in the clinic, and then having opportunity to do an externship outside, having an assessment, we have a neuropsychological assessment placement, that was helpful. I don’t like doing that, I never wanna do it again (laughs) so it was helpful, I learned that (laughs)… just getting a varied clinical experience.” (Advanced trainee))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(12, 41.4)</td>
<td>“Definitely… the placements at different sites have definitely been the number one most helpful thing in my development…. just being in the room with lots of clients has been really, really helpful.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supervisors</strong></td>
<td>(“It’s been a good experience to get so many different perspectives, and you know, I haven’t had just the same type of supervisor each time. I’ve had supervisors who have been relational, supervisors who have been classical, people who have been more ego psychology, people who have been, interpersonal. I’ve had a lot of different supervisors.” (Advanced trainee))</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3, 10.3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6 (continued)

Summary of Trainees’ Assessment of Training with Examples from the Narratives

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<tr>
<th>Helpful Aspects of Training</th>
<th>Examples from the Narratives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors</td>
<td>“All the different supervisions I’ve got… has really been helpful… I’ve been in so many different placements, I’ve been exposed to different supervisors who have different orientations, which has been helpful… ‘cause then I figure out different ways to conceptualize cases and how to like move forward with that.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>“I think the most helpful in terms of my development was the different experiences that I got. Different settings, different supervisors, different ways of thinking. The more I was exposed to different differences, the more I could develop my taste… what I like, what I don’t like.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Exposure to different perspectives is extremely important. Exposure to different diverse clients…to different theoretical and different professional approaches is extremely important.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coursework and readings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coursework</td>
<td>“I’ve had a lot of good core classes…we did have a class on clinical interviewing which was supposed to prepare us for the clinic. I don’t think anything could really prepare you for your first client, but it was a step in the right direction” (Beginner trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“The experiential classes that I took were very helpful, especially when it’s first starting.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readings</td>
<td>“What’s been helpful is reading… compellingly written articles or essays… by experienced clinicians. That has been extremely helpful in terms of my understanding of how to think about my work with patients and as a person in the world.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 6 (continued)

**Summary of Trainees’ Assessment of Training with Examples from the Narratives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helpful Aspects of Training</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Readings</strong> <em>(n, %)</em></td>
<td>“The books that I read that were recommended to me…I found those helpful... books that have case examples in them, or even like literally therapist, patient, therapist, patient, with a line-by-line what they’re saying, I really can just wrap my brain around that and feel like I can just learn techniques.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Being part of a professional community</strong> <em>(n, %)</em></td>
<td>“And I really think that those kind of professional relationships we form in different clinical settings are what helps once we leave… go on for a job after post-doc, I don’t think they look at grades anymore. I think they start looking at who you know, who you’ve worked with, and what those people say about you, and so having these kind of connections is awesome, I think, for not only the learning experience, but also for continuing on after our training.” (Beginner trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peers</strong> <em>(n, %)</em></td>
<td>“The encounter with the system as a whole. Being part of a professional community has been very helpful.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peers</strong> <em>(n, %)</em></td>
<td>“I mean my cohort’s really great…They’re so supportive and just going through it with them…” (Beginner trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peers</strong> <em>(n, %)</em></td>
<td>“And to have a group of people who are going through the same thing, who are at the same place I am, right now everybody in my group thinks they’re horrible therapists, and that’s very helpful for me! (laughs) I feel pretty horrible right now! (laughs) are you feeling horrible? Okay, that’s good! (laughs).” (Beginner trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Peers</strong> <em>(n, %)</em></td>
<td>“And also… talking to my classmates, you know, sharing, hearing their perspective and being able to talk openly with them that’s been good.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 6 (continued)

**Summary of Trainees’ Assessment of Training with Examples from the Narratives**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helpful Aspects of Training</th>
<th>Examples from the Narratives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Clinical experience</strong></td>
<td>“Just interacting with people and clients, and learning like when things fail, you know, you try something and it just fails or you try something crazy and it works really well, just being able to do that.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5, 17.2)</td>
<td>“I guess getting thrown in there and just doing the actual hands-on therapy.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Increased self-awareness</strong></td>
<td>“I think what’s been most helpful for me is to really examine myself and understanding myself. I think ultimately what I’m learning in the last few years… It’s really about understanding my strength and areas of improvement, what kind of person I am, how I work, how I do things, how I think and how that impacts my work with clients… it’s really been about understanding myself sort of in a fuller sense.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2, 6.9)</td>
<td>“My program… has the advantage of it being dynamic, it was very group process-oriented so… we did a lot of training in groups around diversity, examining our bias kind of thing that to me was extremely helpful…” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal therapy</strong></td>
<td>“Being in outside therapy… I feel like that is pretty essential… I really think you should be in therapy and have that experience of what it’s like to be a patient. And I also found it to be the richest learning experience, so that was most helpful, even though it wasn’t required.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
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<td>(2, 6.9)</td>
<td>“My analysis helps me in certain ways… as a person, as a therapist… if I were seeing patients now, there would be a lot of things, I think, based on the therapy that I’m doing now that would come through.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Research</strong></td>
<td>“I think the research experience helps you develop a certain way of thinking and you don’t take anything for face value, you know. You should always go the step beyond and question things…and I like getting the research experience ‘cause it just opens up more doors for future careers.” (Beginner trainee)</td>
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<td>(1, 3.4)</td>
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</table>
Table 6 (continued)

Summary of Trainees’ Assessment of Training with Examples from the Narratives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspects Missing from Training (n, %)</th>
<th>Examples from the Narratives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A personally involved holding (training) environment (15, 51.7)</td>
<td>“I would have wanted more mentorship… when I was an undergrad, I felt like I had a lot of mentorship in terms of feeling free to knock on someone’s door and just sit down, and then give you… 30 minutes of their time to devote to you. As a doctoral student… I feel like I have very non-personal mentorship…on how to get your dissertation done… just strict supervisory relationship. But I don’t feel the mentorship in terms of someone asking me how are you doing personally or what’s going on in your life… I think that would be helpful because… you could feel supported and feel that there’s someone who’s actually rooting for you.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“While I feel like my advisor we have a good working relationship, there’s not much personal kind of connection or anything, it’s just work… I wouldn’t just go in and just talk about my life and like what I’ve been doing, one on one and have it be like a genuine exchange, you know, and have that person really care about what I’m doing, as opposed to kinda, the way it’s done is like… it’s not like personal.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“That kind of mentorship aspect… when I think about my professional development, it’s like, Okay, so after next year, I’m done. How am I gonna find a job?... All of these things are still kind of big mysteries to me, and I don’t really have anyone that I can look to say, Oh…They’re like me and they’ve made it… I feel that I don’t have a role model kind of thing. And I think especially for people who are first in their family to be entering a profession, it’s really hard. Like my parents had jobs, they didn’t have careers. (Advanced trainee)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“I feel like there just need to be some personal elements in general [in supervision] to just check in with people and just to remind us that we’re human and to remind us that it’s not just about the program or it’s not just about publications or it’s not just about your clients. But to somehow be reminded that it’s okay to be a human being, it’s okay to have a personal life…” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aspects Missing from Training (n, %)</td>
<td>Examples from the Narratives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Coursework (7, 24.1)</td>
<td>“I think in the training here, we have a couple of classes, like clinical interviewing and introduction to psychotherapy. Both could have been fantastic dynamic classes that really get you prepared for individual psychotherapy. And they were a joke… not a lot of hands-on things to really learn how to do this work… I think they did a minimal job.” (Beginner trainee)</td>
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<td>“I think more concrete, I would dare say, courses on how to do therapy. On what to expect and not to expect.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“We got way too much testing… I think it’s like four classes of testing, and I really feel that took away from a chance to learn more theory… my knowledge of theory was so limited up until I came to this externship where I started to read more about Klein and even Freud.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
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<td>“I think it should be mandatory to have some sort of family therapy training. I can’t believe I didn’t have family therapy class.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
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<td>Clinical supervision (5, 17.2)</td>
<td>“I don’t know if any of us could find the time, but just having more supervision time would be really good.” (Beginner trainee)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“Supervisors who weren’t as effective was least helpful… supervisors who weren’t aware of themselves or never want to talk about the transference or clearly knew that I was upset about something but never challenged me on it, or never challenged me in general where clearly I was having an issue with a client… who just weren’t knowledgeable about multicultural issues… Sometimes when I felt like I knew more than my supervisor that would be a problem.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
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Table 6 (continued)

Summary of Trainees’ Assessment of Training with Examples from the Narratives

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<th>Aspects Missing from Training</th>
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<tr>
<td>Structure of training</td>
<td>“I think that they should have spread out the classes into four years. I thought it was too quick… like somebody tried to jam like a hundred years of stuff (laughs) down your throat. It was too much.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
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<td>(3, 10.3)</td>
<td>“A criticism of the curriculum… maybe some more structure… It is a long time, I think it could be streamlined… I just don’t feel like it’s necessary to be here that long, especially when you have a Master’s degree from the same place… just the way the clinical experiences are sequenced, and the different program requirements… you have to do this before you can do that.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
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<td>Overall positive experience</td>
<td>“I don’t think I can say anything that I wish would be different. I think that even negative experiences, I sort of looking back, I really appreciated them ‘cause it was a learning experience for me. I think overall I’m very pleased.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
</tr>
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<td>(6, 20.7)</td>
<td>“I think that even the things that weren’t helpful exactly were still valuable… whatever was not directly helpful was at least served to really orient me in this field. I know what’s going on now, you know? I know what work people are doing, I know what exists out there, I know what different threads of thought there are and… that’s invaluable just to have had that experience, you know?” (Advanced trainee)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>“There are things I didn’t get, but I feel like those are very knowledge-based, materialistic, I didn’t get this training or I didn’t get this knowledge or I wish I knew more about this or that. But those things, I feel I can get in the future. So when I fully think about it, I don’t regret any of the trainings that I have gotten. I don’t think there was anything that was really crucial that I missed out on that I feel like it is damaging in any way or whatnot.” (Advanced trainee)</td>
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**Helpful Aspects of Training**

The most prevalent theme (21 participants, 72.4%) to emerge from participants’ accounts about what they found most helpful in training in terms of their development is what I term “a personally involved holding (training) environment.” This category refers to the role certain supervisors, mentors, and advisors often play in participants’ development. Participants described such an involvement as a delicate balance between providing support and guidance—while at times challenging trainees—and allowing trainees to freely explore and find their own unique voice. The aspect of being personally involved with trainees, such as taking an interest in their personal life, is emphasized. It is the sense of being *with* someone as trainees learn and develop that makes an impact. Often participants mentioned the parallel process between their relationships with mentors and supervisors and their relationships with their patients, pointing to the provision of empathy, personal engagement, and self-exploration with another that happens in both types of relationships. The data suggest that experiencing these qualities in their relationships with supervisors, teachers, and mentors supports trainees’ ability to provide that to their patients. Having that space for themselves promotes a certain emotional availability.

Interestingly, the majority of participants in their coursework stage (88.9%) reported this aspect of training as helpful, compared to 65.0% of advanced trainees. While this is certainly an important aspect of training for trainees of all developmental stages, it appears to be more present for trainees who are still taking courses and thus in more continuous interaction with their training program. For trainees who had finished the coursework phase and moved on to work on their dissertation or to internship, the holding aspect of their training program was naturally less present. It is also possible that beginner trainees need this
kind of holding support more than advanced trainees and thus appreciate it more. However, as I will discuss later, when looking at aspects that are missing from training, the difference between beginner and advanced trainees who desire more support and guidance decreases (55.6% and 50%, respectively). In addition, when combining those who reported that this aspect is missing in their training and those who found it helpful into a general category of valuing the support and guidance that the training environment provides or can provide, the difference is again reduced (88.9% [8] of beginner trainees versus 75% [15] of advanced trainees).

Another, very much related, aspect of training that many participants (14, 48.3%) find central to their development is supervision. What participants find most helpful is the guidance supervisors give them with their clinical work, helping them with case conceptualization, technique, linking theory to clinical work, and figuring out transference and countertransference issues. Participants emphasize the opportunity to learn psychotherapy work in a one-on-one relationship, to explore different ways of working, and to over time expand their therapeutic style and repertoire. I included two additional aspects of supervision under different categories: the personal nature of the relationship with supervisors (included in the above category of “a personally involved holding environment”) and exposure to a variety of supervisors (included in a subsequent category of “exposure to variety of training experiences”). When the number of participants reporting these two aspects of supervision is added, supervision appears to be the most important aspect of training in terms of trainees’ development, mentioned by 23 participants (79.31%). This category of supervision and the previous category of the holding environment, taken together, underscore the centrality of personal engagement with others in psychotherapists’
development. In terms of developmental stage, while participants of all stages reported supervision to be important, it is somewhat more prevalent among advanced trainees. Specifically, 33.3% of beginner trainees and 55% of advanced trainees reported supervision to be a helpful aspect of their training.

The exposure to a variety of training experiences—different supervisors, clinical settings, patients, professional roles, theoretical perspectives and so on—was reported by 12 participants (41.4%) as a helpful aspect of their training. Such variety of experiences, participants reported, both expands their knowledge, skills, and ways of thinking and working, and helps refine their professional interests and inclinations as they encounter experiences that resonate with them or alternatively are incongruent with their style. The majority (11, 91.7%) of participants who reported this aspect of their training are advanced trainees. They represent 55.0% of advanced trainees in the sample. It is possible that more experienced trainees, having been through different training experiences and having a broader perspective, are in a better position to appreciate this aspect of their training.

Five participants at different training stages (17.2%) mentioned the experience of being part of a professional community as a helpful aspect of their training, referring to interactions and forming connections with the larger community of psychotherapists (2, 6.9%), and to the sense of shared experience with peers (3, 10.3%). These qualities are particularly important for participants as they cope with the many challenges of training and as they embark on their professional journey post training. This again touches in a different way on the aspect of personal involvement with others. It is different from the holding environment category in that it refers to a more symmetrical experience of being with others as colleagues, whereas the former has a more mentorship quality.
Coursework and readings were reported as important to development by six participants (20.7%). Participants mostly emphasized acquiring knowledge that supported their clinical work, referring to experiential classes and clinical papers and books.

Clinical experience was reported by five participants (17.2%) as a central aspect in their development. It refers to the actual experience with patients, being thrown into the work, and “doing it.” When the aspect of variety of clinical experiences is taken into account (included in the category of variety of training experiences), this category becomes more prevalent, reported by 34.5% (10) of participants. It is notable that supervision is experienced as important to one’s development by more participants than the actual clinical work, suggesting again that training experiences acquire their meaning and impact when they are processed with another. Four of the five participants reporting the aspect of clinical experience as helpful are advanced trainees. Similarly, all the participants who stated that variety of clinical experiences was helpful are advanced trainees.

Two participants mentioned the increased self-awareness gained in training, learning about one’s strengths, limitations, biases, ways of thinking, and areas of vulnerability, as important to one’s development as a psychotherapist and a professional. Two others cited personal therapy, which promoted their development by providing the experience of being a patient, learning about oneself, and learning about psychotherapy through modeling. Finally, one participant mentioned research as an important experience, developing one’s critical skills and opening up professional opportunities.

Aspects Missing in Training

As with helpful aspects of training, the most prevalent category of aspects that are missing in training is a personally involved holding (training) environment, reported by 15
participants (51.7%). This category was reported by trainees at different training stages (55.6% of beginners and 50.0% of advanced trainees). Discussing this subject, participants expressed a desire for more guidance with the training process, with its various demands and trajectories; more dialogue about professional issues; mentorship of a more personal nature; attention to and protection of their academic and professional needs; support of their professional choices; and generally a more collaborative and supportive training atmosphere.

What emerges from trainees’ accounts is the wish to be “seen,” “held,” and protected by the training environment, and to be part of a personally meaningful exchange with mentors, supervisors, and peers around professional and training concerns. Of the 15 participants asking for more personal involvement with the training environment, 13 (86.7%) mentioned the aspect of the holding environment when asked about what they found helpful in terms of their development. Stated differently, of the 21 participants who appreciated the guidance and support that their training environment provided (as noted in the section about helpful aspects of training), many (61.9%) also felt that what was provided was insufficient, desiring more support and personal involvement.

Seven participants (24.1%) reported aspects pertaining to coursework as missing from training. Specifically, participants asked for more or better classes on psychotherapy work, clinical theory, and on particular subjects, such as family therapy or termination in therapy. This category was reported equally by beginner and advanced trainees.

Aspects concerning supervision were reported by five participants (17.2%) as missing from training. Participants asked for more supervision hours, better quality of supervision, and particular formats of supervision, such as live supervision and watching one’s own supervisor in action. Included in the holding environment category, three participants wished
for more personal involvement with supervisors, desiring “connection” with supervisors, being challenged by supervisors and exploring with supervisors the process of the supervisory relationship itself.

Three participants (10.3%) referred to aspects of the structure of training, feeling that coursework should be spread out to four years rather than the typical three, that training programs should be more open to a variety of theoretical perspectives, and that a better balance should be reached between clinical work and research.

Finally, six participants (20.7%) reported that overall they have had a very positive training experience and had not missed anything that was fundamental to their development or that could not be gained later on. They acknowledged the many components that the project of becoming a psychotherapist involves and the challenge training programs face in providing it all. Two participants also stated that the negative experiences they had turned out to be important learning experiences, and in that sense also contributed to their development.

**Summary and Discussion**

The most significant theme to emerge from the analysis of participants’ evaluation of training is the centrality of active and personal engagement with the training environment to trainees’ professional development. This theme was manifested in trainees’ appreciation (and desire for more) of the holding function of training environment, supervision, and being part of a community. Taken together, this theme was expressed by 27 of the 29 participants (93.1%). This is a testimony to the personal and interactive nature of the process of becoming a psychotherapist. It is also not surprising, given that the psychotherapy trade is learned primarily through mentorship and fundamentally involves the psychotherapist’s self. However, what is notable is trainees’ recognition and articulation of the importance of this
quality. This finding goes hand-in-hand with the finding that the challenge most prevalent among participants was coping with issues concerning professional development. There is a clear message for the training environment for greater involvement in trainees’ development.

Given the size of the sample and the fact that it is tilted towards more advanced trainees (69%), observations about evaluation of training as a function of participants’ training stage are tentative. The most observable differences between beginner and advanced trainees appear to be with regard to the categories of “personally involved holding environment,” “supervision,” and “variety of training experiences.” Specifically, a higher percentage of beginner trainees valued the personal involvement of the training environment, whereas advanced trainees were more appreciative of supervision and the variety of experiences to which they have been exposed.

It is notable that only two participants mentioned increased self-awareness as a helpful aspect of training. This is in marked contrast to research indicating that trainees’ self-reflection and self-knowledge are among the most important factors promoting professional development (Orlinsky, & Rønnestad, 2005; Rønnestad & Skovholt, 2003). On the other hand, when I asked participants in the interview which personal qualities they considered to be important for psychotherapists, 52% mentioned self-awareness/self-reflection. While it is possible that trainees do not value this aspect in terms of their training, I believe that if they were asked directly whether they thought increased self-awareness was very important to their professional development, the majority would respond positively. I think the reason for this low prevalence is rooted in the phrasing of the question, which focused on aspects of training contributing to one’s development. That is, I believe that trainees do not perceive the provision of opportunities for reflection as the role of training. Interestingly, even when
discussing helpful aspects of supervision (i.e., the forum in which self-reflection primarily takes place), participants talked about expansion of their therapeutic style but not of developing reflective capacities or increasing self-understanding. Throughout the interview, several participants referred to the encounter with supervisors – with different ways of working – as helpful in refining their interests and becoming more aware of their therapeutic style. However, this process seemed to happen internally and was not engaged directly in supervision with supervisors. Indeed, when asked in the background questionnaire about the extent to which their training program provided opportunities to discuss professional identity and the extent to which they discussed such issues in personal therapy, participants were significantly more likely to use the latter for such discussion ($t = -3.40, n = 26, p = .002$).

This aspect of providing formal opportunities for self-reflection goes hand-in-hand with providing trainees’ a personally involved holding environment.

Finally, given that doctoral psychotherapy programs combine clinical and research components, it is also notable that only one participant mentioned research experience as a helpful aspect of her training contributing to her professional development. Overall, in the narratives participants did not talk much about their identities as researchers, suggesting that they view it as separate from their psychotherapist identity (interview questions mostly referred to the experience of being a psychotherapist). It is my impression that participants mentioned their experience with research when it complemented or benefited their clinical interests (e.g., choosing a dissertation topic that parallels one’s clinical interests), or when the two identities conflicted (e.g., putting one’s identity as a psychotherapist on hold while working on the dissertation; feeling uncomfortable with one’s clinical aspirations in a research-oriented program).
APPENDIX K: THE PERSPECTIVE OF CONTEXT: CONTEXTUAL CHALLENGES

I began the presentation of my theoretical framework by focusing on the perspective of the context within which trainees learn and develop. I presented a summary of trainees’ experience of their training environment—its particular challenges and demands. Underlying this portrayal of professional and developmental challenges are three qualities I identified in my analysis of the narratives: ambiguity, complexity, and constant change. I use these concepts as umbrella terms for groups of related and overlapping qualities that I found to be primary in trainees’ experience of their psychotherapy work, training environment, and psychotherapy profession.

_Ambiguity_ refers to qualities of blurred boundaries, vagueness, unpredictability, uncertainty, and confusion (vs. clear boundaries, clarity, predictability, certainty, and familiarity) that often characterize the cultural and professional context in which psychotherapist trainees operate. In the narratives, trainees expressed in different ways the considerable ambiguity they experience in training as they explore their environment and gradually define and differentiate themselves. They talked about trying to grasp new and vague ideas in supervision or classes, the blurred boundaries between supervision and personal psychotherapy, the unpredictable and at times perplexing nature of clinical work, and the uncertainty of their professional future.

_Complexity_ refers to the heterogeneous, multiple, contradictory, plural, multi-faceted, and intricate (vs. homogeneous, singular, simple, and consistent) nature of the training experiences trainees encounter. It manifests in trainees’ stories in the variety of theoretical perspectives and treatment models to which they are exposed; in the different settings of clinical work; in the

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187 This theoretical development was described in the section of analysis of narratives, Phase V: Deconstructing the Clusters, p. 96).
encounters with supervisors with different, often contradictory, therapeutic approaches; in complex presenting problems of clients of diverse backgrounds; in the different conceptualizations to which clinical data can lend themselves; in multiple therapeutic interventions that can be made at a given clinical moment; and in the need to negotiate multiple professional and personal demands.

*Constant change* refers to the in-flux (vs. stable and consistent) nature of clinical practice, training, and the broader cultural context. It manifests in the changing needs of clients, in the always evolving nature of the therapeutic relationship, in the constant emergence of new theoretical perspectives and treatment models, in the changing professional roles trainees occupy, and in the new and changing demands that training involves.
APPENDIX L: A SEGMENT FROM THE CODING SYSTEM

General Instructions:
Please read each of the following statements and CIRCLE the type of identity configuration that is most likely to make this statement:

A. Structure-Reliant  B. Open to Experience  C. Reactive  D. Reflective

In addition, please rate each of the statements according to the extent to which you think each identity configuration is likely to make this statement:

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<td>Open to Experience</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Reflective</td>
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Statements:

1. You know, I think that I was the therapist in my family before I ever knew that I was doing that. My parents had a difficult marriage they ended up divorcing when I was twenty-one but growing up they were often fighting and I think that I was very early on playing mediator you know… I remember saying mom what dad means to say is you know and trying to help them talk about their feelings in more constructive ways…. I remember just being their therapist you know so mm, that was always there. And also a real introspective nature, you know with my own development my own questions.

A. Structure-Reliant  B. Open to Experience  C. Reactive  D. Reflective

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2. The third year is kind of this weird blur. It- I just- a lot- it was a lot of work, it was a lot of pulling things together, dealing with a research project that I really hated, you know, and- and forcing myself to do things I didn’t want to be angry about being beaten into submission, you know, and I just- I think that’s actually when I started to really question mm my place in this field, you know? Like- so it was- it’s- and then this year has been mm kind of more of the same of that questioning process, you know. Like where do I belong in this field?

A. Structure-Reliant  B. Open to Experience  C. Reactive  D. Reflective
3. Despite my background in science, I’m not really sure that I view mm therapy mm as being part of that empirical, mm objectivist, you know, scientific realistic paradigm. I actually kind of think of psychology more of being- if it is a science, it’s a very new science, and so I have more of a post-modern kind of view on things in general…so the notion of empirically-validated treatments and mm and sort of coming up with a once-one, you know- it’s not one size fits all… it definitely didn’t appeal to me.

A. Structure-Reliant  B. Open to Experience  C. Reactive  D. Reflective

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4. There is so much that we just don’t know in this field, and I think that, you know, I think about myself and people that I know, and I think therapy helped them, but not enough like, I guess my fantasy would be that therapy would be like an open heart surgery, you know, you come, and pretty much you’re fixed, in many ways, and I think therapy is not like that, because so many things we don’t understand and many of these is because of course people are so complicated, but also because I think the clinical work is not also is not always informed by research.

A. Structure-Reliant  B. Open to Experience  C. Reactive  D. Reflective

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5. I’ve integrated a lot mm more being in treatment by attitude and doing meditation and- and sort of active kinds of things in therapy as a result of that as well because I don’t tell my clients to go and meditate. We meditate in session, for instance. Mm I think that there is- I think there’s a great value to talking, but I think being and- and doing is also really important, and I think people from different backgrounds value that more. I- I would suspect that that’s one reason why a lot of people drop out of
therapy is- is because the modality isn’t congruent with their life experience. So- so I’ve tried to just get as many as possible so that I can try to relate to the client.

A. Structure-Reliant  B. Open to Experience  C. Reactive  D. Reflective

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</tbody>
</table>

6. (In response to what are important qualities for therapists) Curiosity about yourself, the world, people, life in general. Going back to the thing I said about the English versus psychology, being more interested in the questions than the answers I think is a very important mm modeling, but f- for therapists, what other qualities I think that mm therapists have to have a certain level of self knowledge I don’t really think I can think of any therapists that I think are all that great, who haven’t spent some time getting to know themselves.

A. Structure-Reliant  B. Open to Experience  C. Reactive  D. Reflective

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not likely</th>
<th>Somewhat likely</th>
<th>Most likely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structure-Reliant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open to Experience</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. I really want to get more experience and more familiarity with mm like manualized treatments, and I want to be like, oh, I know this, I know that one. I want to have the- the manuals. I want to- anything more and even more and even like specific- I mean, I’d like to- you know, I wish I could say, I need a DBT or I wish I could mm- you know, I don’t- I don’t know what else would be comparable, but just kind of more- (2 seconds) I don’t know, more- more recognized, you know, and clear-cut ways of dealing with- just with people. I wish I could have that under my belt. I just think that those are like skills that you have, that everyone knows what they are. They’re marketable, they’re like a bullet point on your resume.
8. Mm I think through the years, I’ve learned to separate myself or try to separate myself from my clients’ lives and what they’re going through, mm but sometimes it’s very difficult to do that and I find myself thinking about them a lot, like during the week when I don’t see them mm and stressing about it. And I guess doubting that I’m- I’m doing a good job.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Open to Experience</th>
<th>Reactive</th>
<th>Reflective</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Structure-Reliant</td>
<td>B. Open to Experience</td>
<td>C. Reactive</td>
<td>D. Reflective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not likely</td>
<td>Somewhat likely</td>
<td>Most likely</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure-Reliant</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open to Experience</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflective</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX M: TRAINING OF CODERS

Training was done once a week over four group meetings, each lasting about two hours. Meetings took place in a designated classroom at Teachers College. Prior to the first meeting, I emailed coders reading material, which included the theoretical background chapter of my study proposal, a brief review of research design and method, and a lengthy description of the theoretical framework, focusing on the four identity configurations. During the first meeting I reviewed this material with the coders and we engaged in a discussion about it. I illustrated the four identity configurations with narrative data and encouraged questions. At the end of the meeting I gave coders a practice coding packet of 40 statements to code independently at home before the next training meeting. The practice packet was in the same format as the coding packet, only with different statements. We coded the first few statements together for illustration. I asked coders to track their experience as they do the coding and document questions, dilemmas, and anything that seemed meaningful. Training statements were mostly statements taken from the narratives (in addition to a few statements that I wrote). In between meetings I was available to answer questions regarding the theory and coding via email, of which coders made use at times.

At the beginning of the second group meeting I gave coders a comparative table summarizing the main characteristics of each identity configuration. We went over it and discussed general questions regarding the theory that came up for them during the coding. For each statement, each of the coders stated her coding out loud and we then engaged in a discussion, trying to understand the rationale behind rating decisions of each of the participants. Throughout these discussions I attempted to create a comfortable and open atmosphere and

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188 Prior to training I went over the narratives and took out passages that seemed appropriate for coding. I chose 80 statements that seemed most coherent for the coding system and used the rest for training.
invited feedback and challenges from the coders. I attempted to convey the message that there is no right or wrong way to understand the statements, that my classifications are one perspective, and that the goal is to try to arrive at a group consensus, rather than to accept my classifications. There were several times in which I was persuaded to read a statement from a different perspective.

In teaching the theory I tried to sensitize coders to the fundamental differences among the four identity configurations, as well as to details that often convey underlying differences. Similarly, in teaching the coding, I attempted to help coders read the statements as a whole, focusing on their main message or themes, as well as to notice and pay attention to key words and ideas. During discussions of rating, as certain themes came up or repeated areas of confusion became apparent, we went back to the theoretical concepts trying to clarify their similarities and differences. During this second meeting one of the coders appeared to struggle with understanding some of the differences between the identity configurations, and her ratings tended to be less consistent with the other group members’ ratings. At the end of the meeting I gave coders another practice packet containing 16 statements.

During the third group meeting we finished going over the first and second practice packets. Coders overall seemed to have a much deeper and nuanced understanding of the theoretical concepts and how to apply it to coding of the statements. The coder who appeared to struggle in prior meeting improved considerably. However, as mentioned in the reliability discussions, another coder, Coder C, appeared to struggle with the coding, often demonstrating a more idiosyncratic reading of the statements, and elaborating the text with associations from her own experience in a way that was at times one step removed from the text. Attention was
directed at trying to clarify areas of confusion. At the end of the meeting, I gave coders another practice packet containing 25 statements.

During the fourth and final group meeting, we finished going over the practice statements. I reviewed the theory and the coding system once more and answered questions. With the exception of coder C who was still inconsistent in her ratings, I felt relatively comfortable with the level of training that was provided and with the other two coders’ proficiency with the coding. Coders also reported feeling comfortable with the task at hand and were enthusiastic about it. I gave them a hard copy of the coding packet and later emailed them a digital copy. During the coding period which lasted three weeks there was no contact between me and coders. They emailed me a digital copy of their ratings at the end of that period.
APPENDIX N: RELIABILITY RESULTS WITH CODER C

Table 7 presents reliability scores for the continuous and categorical coding, comparing the scores of coders A and B to C. While Coder C’s scores were lower than the scores of the other two coders, they were still substantial. Similarly, the combined scores (i.e., Generalized Kappa for the categorical coding and Intra-Class Correlation for the continuous coding) were lower when the ratings of Coder C were included, but still substantial (i.e., .77 and .79).

Table 7

Reliability of Categorical and Continuous Coding for Pairs of Coders and all Coders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categorical Coding</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cohen’s Kappa</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Investigator</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coder A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coder B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coder C</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generalized Kappa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>With Coder C</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Without coder C</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Continuous Coding</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pearson Correlation</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Investigator</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coder A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coder B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coder C</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Table 7 (continued)

Reliability of Categorical and Continuous Coding for Pairs of Coders and all Coders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Intra-Class Correlation (ICC)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With Coder C&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.79***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without coder C&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>.84***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>b</sup>Two-way mixed single measure type of ICC.

**<sup>p </sup>< .01. ***<sup>p </sup>< .000.
APPENDIX O: CONSISTENCY OF RATING WITHIN INTERVIEWS

Table 8 compares the categorical coding that coders gave to statements per interview with my own classification of the interview to one or more of the identity configurations. It should be noted that the following presentation is not rigorous in nature and is more impressionistic, meant to suggest yet another perspective on the data.

The first column to the left shows the number of statements that were taken from each interview, with a range of five to twelve statements per interview. The second column shows my classification of the narrative as a whole. The third column, divided into three separated sub-categories, shows the coders’ ratings of statements. Ratings are aggregated across raters. I included the ratings of the two coders whose scores were included in the reliability computations as well as the ratings of all three coders. The first sub-category, identity configurations, shows the four possible classifications for each statement rated. The second sub-category of the two coders shows in percentages the frequency with which the two coders classified statements taken from this specific interview to each of the four identity configurations (as a reminder, in the categorical coding, coders could classify statements to one of the four identity configurations). The third sub-category provides the same information as the previous one only for the three coders. Thus, for example, the first row shows an interview from which 12 statements were included. My classification of this interview was of the meaning-maker. This means that all statements taken from that interview represent in my view the identity configuration of the meaning-maker. Looking at the two coders’ classifications (which overall would be 24 ratings—twelve ratings from each of the two coders), one can see that 75% of the statements (i.e., 18
statements) were rated by the two coders as the meaning meaning-maker. One of the advantages of presenting the data in this manner is that it provides an idea about the ways in which the different classifications may be confused. For instance, for this particular interview, the reactive classification appears more plausible than the open-to-experience classification.

Some interviews were classified as a combination of two identity configurations. The identity configuration appearing first and marked in bold is the primary classification. Statements taken from that interview reflect the combined classification, with more statements representative of the primary classification. This ratio between statements representing the primary and the secondary classification appears in parentheses in the first column for combined interviews. Thus, for example for the third interview, classified as primarily reactive and secondarily as open-to-experience, seven statements out of the nine represent the reactive identity configuration. The two coders’ ratings seem to express my classification with 72.2% of the statements classified as reactive and 27.8% as open to experience. Of course, in considering the meaning of the frequency of ratings, one has to consider the number of statements per interview.

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189 This presentation of the data does not take into account variation within the coders. That is, one coder may be more consistent with my own classifications than the other. However, since the reliability scores were generally high, such variation is likely to be relatively small.

190 This classification is based on the original classifications I assigned each of the narratives based on an in-depth analysis of the whole narratives. Statements later taken from the interview were chosen also to represent the specific classification.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Statements</th>
<th>Investigator’s Classification</th>
<th>Coders’ Classification</th>
<th>2 Coders %</th>
<th>3 Coders %</th>
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<td>Identity configuration</td>
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<td>0.0</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Open to Experience</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>13.9</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reactive</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Meaning-Maker</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>69.4</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td><strong>Structure-Reliant</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Structure-Reliant</td>
<td>95.5</td>
<td>97.0</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Open to Experience</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
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<td>Reactive</td>
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<td>0.0</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Meaning-Maker</td>
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<tr>
<td>9 (7, 2)</td>
<td><strong>Reactive</strong> &amp; Open to Experience</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Open to Experience</td>
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<td>25.9</td>
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<td>74.1</td>
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<td>0.0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 (6, 2)</td>
<td><strong>Open to Experience</strong> &amp; Meaning-Maker</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Structure-Reliant</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Open to Experience</td>
<td>81.3</td>
<td>75.0</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reactive</td>
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<td>0.0</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meaning-Maker</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>16.7</td>
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</tr>
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<td>8 (7, 1)</td>
<td><strong>Reactive</strong> &amp; Structure-Reliant</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Structure-Reliant</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Open to Experience</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reactive</td>
<td>93.7</td>
<td>87.5</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Meaning-Maker</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>4.2</td>
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</table>
Table 8 (continued)

Comparison of Investigator and Coders’ Coding within Narratives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Statements(^a)</th>
<th>Investigator’s Classification(^b)</th>
<th>Coders’ Classification(^b)</th>
<th>No. of Statements(^a)</th>
<th>Investigator’s Classification(^b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Identity configuration</td>
<td>2 Coders (^c) %</td>
<td>3 Coders (^c) %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td><strong>Open to Experience</strong>(^d) &amp;</td>
<td>Structure-Reliant</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
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<td>Reactive</td>
<td>Open to Experience</td>
<td>75.0</td>
<td>77.8</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Reactive</td>
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<td>16.7</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>Meaning-Maker</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>5.6</td>
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<td><strong>Structure-Reliant</strong></td>
<td>Structure-Reliant</td>
<td>100.0</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>5</td>
<td><strong>Meaning-Maker</strong>(^d) &amp;</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Open to Experience</td>
<td>20.0</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Reactive</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>Meaning-Maker</td>
<td>70.0</td>
<td>73.3</td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>Reactive</strong>(^d) &amp;</td>
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<td>10.0</td>
<td>6.7</td>
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<td>Open to Experience</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>93.3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Meaning-Maker</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)Number of statements from each interview that were included in the coding. \(^b\)Categorical classification of statements taken from interviews into one of the four identity configurations. \(^c\)This coding includes the third coder who did not achieve sufficient reliability during training. Overall 80 statements were included in the coding. \(^d\)In the combined identity configurations, the state in bold is the more dominant.