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Therapeutic Techniques in Client Emotional Processing: A Review of Experiential Therapy, Psychodynamic Therapy, and Trans-Theoretical Approaches

YUN-JY YEH

Purpose: Emotional processing has been recognized as a common factor in treatment effectiveness. However, research has provided limited information on the influence of therapist variables in facilitating emotional processing. Therapist variables can include therapist attributes and therapeutic techniques. Since no studies were found on examining therapist attributes in emotional processing, the present article aims to review existing empirical studies of therapeutic techniques for facilitating emotional processing and to provide directions for future research in the domains of therapist variables, client factors, and cultural factors in emotional processing. **Methods:** A literature search identified 12 empirical articles published between 1965 and 2016 with regard to therapeutic techniques for facilitating emotional processing. These articles encompassed experiential therapy, psychodynamic therapy and trans-theoretical approaches. **Results:** In the literature on experiential therapy, therapeutic techniques such as the Gestalt two-chair technique and the meaning symbolization technique facilitate emotional processing effectively. Across theoretical orientations, supportive techniques such as empathy, friendly and non-controlling interventions, and reflections and acknowledgements have been demonstrated to lead to a higher level of emotional processing. Techniques that yielded mixed results across theoretical approaches in producing effective emotional processing were interpretations from psychodynamic therapy, confrontations, and therapist self-disclosures. The results of this review pointed out that other factors such as therapist attributes and cultural factors can interact with therapist interventions in emotional processing even though there is a paucity of research in this area. **Conclusions:** This review indicates that therapeutic techniques can be influential in emotional processing. This review suggests that further knowledge on therapist contributions and cultural factors in client emotional processing is imperative to fully understand the change mechanisms underlying emotional processing.

Key words: therapist techniques, emotional processing, therapist variables

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Introduction

A recent paradigm shift in the field of psychotherapy emphasizes the role of emotion in treatment effectiveness. As pointed out by Greenberg (2012), the adaptive and informative nature of emotion has provided a new perspective in psychotherapy research and practice from which emotion is viewed as the key mechanism of change in psychotherapy rather than as a byproduct of cognition. That is, theoretical discussions and empirical evidence revealed that emotions are at the heart of human functioning and psychotherapy. In the area of psychotherapy, one of the powerful ways of conceptualizing how emotions can be worked through lies in understanding how emotional processing functions.

The concept of emotional processing has sparked much theoretical discussion in psychotherapy and numerous research studies indicated that emotional processing is one of the key change mechanisms in psychotherapy across various theoretical orientations (Castonguay, Goldfried, Wiser, Raue, & Hayes, 1996; Greenberg & Pascual-Leone, 2006; Kramer, Pascual-Leone, Despland, & de Roten, 2015). The term "emotional processing" was first developed by Rachman (1980) in explicating the change mechanisms of exposure therapy for fear and anxiety. Despite the fact that the term was developed in a behavioral approach, the construct of emotional processing has historically been emphasized in humanistic and psychodynamic approaches (see a review by Whelton, 2004). More recently, the effect of emotional processing has been examined and underscored in cognitive-behavioral approaches (Castonguay et al., 1996; Samoilov & Goldfried, 2000). Thus, emotional processing has been recognized as a common factor in psychotherapy. Empirical evidence has demonstrated that therapeutic interventions that are aimed at deepening emotional experiencing can lead to more effective and powerful changes than interventions conducted only at a cognitive level (Watson & Bedard, 2006).

Due to the apparent curative power of emotional processing across theoretical orientations, numerous empirical studies have been undertaken to understand its various aspects. Among the issues examined have been the influence of emotional processing on

therapy outcome (Kramer et al., 2015), the differential effects of emotional processing across various theoretical orientations (Castonguay et al., 1996), and the in-depth change mechanisms of emotional processing in experiential therapy (Pascural-Leone, 2009).

The importance of therapist variables in facilitating effective emotional processing has been underscored by a number of researchers. For instance, in a comprehensive review of 50 empirical studies on the effect of processing emotions on therapy outcome, Orlinsky, Ronnestad, and Willutzki (2004) concluded that "experiencing distressing and negative emotions during sessions has strong effects that can be for good or ill depending on how effectively therapists deal with them." This perspective is consistent with another meta-analytic review conducted by Diener, Hilsenroth, and Weinberger (2007) and their results indicated that the effect size was statistically significant at $r=.30$ suggesting that therapist facilitation of emotional experiencing is correlated with treatment outcome in psychodynamic therapy. The authors further pointed out that "our finding suggests that researchers and clinicians need to pay greater attention to the therapist's role in facilitating patient affect."

In order to identify therapist variables in clients' emotional processing, a review of existing empirical studies from a variety of theoretical orientations is imperative. According to Beutler, Machado, and Neufeld (1994), therapist variables can include therapist techniques and therapist attributes. However, since no studies were found to examine the influence of therapist attributes, the present article will be centered on reviewing research focusing on therapist techniques in facilitating client emotional processing. The necessity of examining the role of therapist attributes in emotional processing will be discussed in the section on directions for future research. In addition, the present review will focus on therapeutic techniques from three theoretical orientations: experiential therapy, psychodynamic therapy and trans-theoretical perspectives because the empirical studies reviewed in the present article revolved around these three theoretical orientations.

Identifying therapist interventions in client emotional processing is an important area of research for three reasons. First, researchers can use this information as a guide

in investigating the more complicated relationships among variables in emotional processing. Given the fact that the curative power of emotional processing has been validated empirically, the next important step will be moving toward investigating the seminal insight by Gordon Paul (1967) and Gelso (1979) referred to as the "who, what, when, and where" question regarding the importance of determining the most effective treatment for a specific client in a particular situation. In the area of emotional processing, an important question will be finding out "how emotional processing is most effective with what clients, when conducted by which therapists using what interventions under what circumstances." Second, trainers and supervisors can use the empirically validated knowledge to coach their supervisees regarding what interventions will be helpful in facilitating emotional processing. Such knowledge is especially important given the fact that emotional processing is a more advanced therapeutic strategy (Hill, 2014) and supervisees may need more guidance regarding what clinicians can do to produce effective emotional processing. Third, such research is especially useful to therapists regardless of experience level and theoretical orientation in guiding their session activity, and broadening their repertoire of therapeutic strategies when deepening emotional processing in therapy.

Taken as a whole, understanding therapist interventions in facilitating emotional processing can be very helpful in psychotherapy research and practice. The present review will serve as an initial step toward integrating existing empirical studies with the aim of providing directions for future research in the area of therapist variables in emotional processing.

Method

There were three steps in the literature search for identifying possible articles for the present review. The first step in the present review was a literature search using PsycINFO and PsycARTICLES between 1965 and Jan 2016 by title, keyword and subject for the

search terms: emotional processing, emotional experiencing, affect processing, therapist activity, and therapist techniques. The reference list of comprehensive reviews of literature was consulted including Diener et al.'s (2007) review and chapter 8 in Lambert's (2004) *Bergin and Garfield's Handbook of Psychotherapy and Behavior Change*. Second, a literature search using electronic databases of Taiwan before 2016 was conducted and the databases are Chinese Electronic Periodical Services, Index to Taiwan Periodical Literature System, and Taiwan Citation Index-Humanistic and Social Sciences. Third, the references of the material meeting the inclusion criteria were reviewed.

The inclusion criteria of the present review were as follows: (a) the study needed to report a quantifiable relationship between emotional processing and some index of therapist variables; (b) the focus of the study had to examine therapist's techniques or interventions related to emotional processing or facilitation of client affect in psychotherapy. The exclusion criteria were: studies investigating the relationship between emotional processing and therapy outcome (*big o*), unless the researcher(s) also examined and reported a quantifiable relationship between therapist techniques and emotional processing. Based on the above mentioned criteria, a total of 12 studies were identified that were focused on examining the relationship between therapist techniques and emotional processing.

Empirical Research on Therapist Interventions in Emotional Experiencing

This section of the review focuses on exploring therapist interventions that facilitate and deepen clients' emotional processing in psychotherapy. Therapeutic techniques that were studied and reviewed will be discussed based on theoretical orientations and the three theoretical approaches are: experiential therapy, psychodynamic therapy and trans-theoretical approaches.

I. Experiential Therapy

The concept of emotional processing has been discussed and examined extensively in experiential therapy. From the perspective of experiential therapy, there are a number of tasks that need to be accomplished in order to produce effective emotional processing. Some examples of these tasks include expressions of emotions, acknowledgement, creation of meaning, and so on (Greenberg & Safran, 1987). Therapist techniques that are aimed at achieving various tasks in emotional processing in experiential therapy have been developed and supported empirically (see Table 1).

Greenberg and Clarke (1979) investigated the influence of two interventions (i.e., Gestalt two-chair techniques and empathic reflections) in facilitating the resolution of internal conflicts on client emotional processing, shifts in awareness and behavioral change. In this analogue study, the researchers asked counselors to conduct interviews with volunteer clients and the results indicated that the Gestalt two-chair techniques led to a significantly higher level of emotional processing than empathic reflections when the treatment focus revolved around resolving intrapersonal conflicts.

In a study with a similar design, Clarke (1989) examined useful techniques in facilitating a task of creating meaning in emotional processing in experiential therapy. Clarke investigated the effects of two interventions (i.e., meaning symbolization techniques and empathetic reflections) on psychotherapy process and outcome in this analogue study. According to Clarke, the meaning symbolization technique is a collection of therapist interventions that involves the utilization of a metaphor or the verbal symbolization of the integration of feelings and thoughts. The results indicated that the meaning symbolization interventions led to higher levels of emotional experiencing than empathic reflections in accomplishing a task of creating meaning.

In sum, while there are limitations regarding the generalizability of the results due to the nature of the analogue design of the studies, preliminary evidence indicated that the therapist interventions that can be effective in producing deeper levels of emotional processing in experiential therapy are the Gestalt two-chair technique (Greenberg &

Table 1 Summary of Therapist Techniques in Facilitating Emotional Processing in
Experiential Therapy

Study	Participants	Therapists	Treatment	Measures	Findings
Clarke (1989)	32 graduate student volunteers majoring in pastoral studies	4 therapists trained in empathetic responding and 4 therapists trained in meaning symbolization	counseling interview	External judges ratings on the Experiencing Scale (EXP; Klein, Mathieu, Gendlin, & Kiesler, 1969)	EXP was significantly higher in the meaning Symbolization group than in the empathy group [$F(1,6)=45.62$, $p<.0005$].
Greenberg & Clarke (1979)	16 graduate student volunteers majoring in counseling psychology	4 counselors with a range of 2 to 6 years of experience	counseling interview	External judges ratings on the Experiencing Scale (EXP; Klein et al., 1969)	EXP was significantly higher in the Gestalt two-chair group than in the empathy group ($F=5.8048$, $p<.05$).

Clarke, 1979) and the meaning symbolization interventions (Clarke, 1989). While the focus of these two empirical studies were different, both studies used empathic reflections as a control group and both interventions have been found to be more effective than empathy in deepening emotional processing. The results suggested that the Gestalt two-chair techniques and the meaning symbolization interventions may have the capacity to lead to a higher level of emotional processing than empathy in experiential therapy. On the other hand, the findings also suggested that it is possible that the therapist technique of empathy can be helpful to promote emotional processing to a certain degree but other kinds of therapist interventions will be required to move beyond the baseline in order to achieve a higher level of emotional processing.

II. Psychodynamic Therapy

Similar to experiential therapy, psychodynamic therapy also emphasizes the healing power of emotional processing, and one therapist technique in facilitating emotional processing that has been examined extensively is therapist interpretations. The reasons that therapist interpretations have received much attention were not only due to the controversies about whether therapist interpretation can be helpful to emotional processing but also due to controversies about how therapist interpretation can promote emotional processing, especially pertaining to the category and the suitability of therapist interpretations. These controversies are also reflected in the mixed results in empirical research on the effect of therapist interpretations from psychodynamic therapy on emotional processing (see Table 2).

McCullough et al. (1991) examined the effects of therapist interventions on therapy outcome and therapist interventions that were studied involve patient-therapist interpretations, patient-significant other interpretations, and clarifications. The authors investigated patient affective responding (i.e., patients expressing emotions verbally or in nonverbal behaviors) in the three minutes following a single incidence of therapist intervention. Patient-therapist interpretations were operationalized as therapist remarks connecting the patient's feelings or behaviors to the therapist. The results suggested that when therapists made patient-therapist interpretations followed by patient affect responding, this combination had a significant effect on therapy outcome. While the results of the study did not explicitly demonstrate that interpretations concerning patient-therapist can lead to emotional processing, the results suggested that patient-therapist interpretations can facilitate client emotional responding, and when that occurs, this interaction can lead to a successful outcome.

Possible benefits of interpretations with regard to patient-therapist interactions in deepening emotional processing, however, were not supported in other studies. Milbrath et al. (1999) designed a new measure named the Psychodynamic Intervention Rating Scale (PIRS) to study the effectiveness of therapeutic techniques on treatment outcome, and

Table 2 Summary of Therapist Techniques in Facilitating Emotional Processing in Psychodynamic Therapy

Study	Participants	Therapists	Treatment	Measures	Findings
Caspar et al. (2000)	3 patients seeking psychotherapy (Case 1 with excellent outcome, Case 2 with moderately good outcome, and Case 3 with poor outcome)	3 experienced therapists with a psychodynamic orientation	Individual brief (16 sessions) weekly psychodynamic therapy	External judges ratings on the Experiencing Scale (EXP; Klein et al., 1969)	EXP were significantly correlated with content plan compatibility (CPC) of the interpretations in Case 1 (r=.41, p<.05), and were highly correlated with process plan compatibility (PPC) in Case 2 (r=.40, p<.05). EXP were not correlated with content plan compatibility (CPC) (r=.19, p>.05, n.s.) or process plan compatibility (r=.02, p>.05, n.s.) in Case 3.
McCullough et al. (1991)	16 patients	12 therapists with an average of 13 years of experience (7 psychiatrists, 3 psychologists, and 2 social workers)	Individual time-limited (27 to 53 sessions) weekly psychodynamic therapy	External judges coded and counted the "Affective Responding" of clients	Patient-therapist interpretations followed by affective responding were positively related to therapy outcome (r=.60, p<.05).
Milbrath et al. (1999)	20 bereaved clients at a university clinic research center	9 therapists (4 clinical psychologists, 3 psychiatrists, and 2 psychiatric social workers)	Individual brief (12 sessions) weekly dynamic therapy	External judges ratings on the measure of Elaboration and Dyselaboration (Horowitz, Milbrath, Reidbord, & Stinson, 1993)	Therapist transference interpretations were significantly associated with patients' conveying facts (Z= -2.24, ES= 0.29).

Table 2 Summary of Therapist Techniques in Facilitating Emotional Processing in Psychodynamic Therapy (continued)

Study	Participants	Therapists	Treatment	Measures	Findings
Silberschatz et al. (1986)	3 patients seeking psychotherapy (Case 1 with excellent outcome, Case 2 with moderately good outcome, and Case 3 with poor outcome)	3 experienced therapists with a psychodynamic orientation	Individual brief (16 sessions) weekly psychodynamic therapy	External judges ratings on the Experiencing Scale (EXP; Klein et al., 1969)	The plan compatibility were significantly related to the EXP for Case 1 (r=.54, p<.001), were significantly related to the EXP for Case 2 (r=.28, p<.01), and were significantly related to the EXP for Case 3 (r=.25, p<.05).
Town et al. (2012)	6 patients with a DSM-IV Cluster C personality disorder	One therapist	Individual weekly Short-Term Dynamic Therapy with a mean of 47 sessions	External judges ratings on the Immediate Affect Experiencing Scale (I-AES) in which the I-AES measure was adapted from the Affect Experiencing Scale, which is part of the Achievement of Therapeutic Objectives Scale (ATOS; McCullough et al., 2003).	The overall fixed effect of therapist interventions was significant (F=5.36, pB=.05). The interventions that had significant effects on the I-AES were: Confrontation-Defense, Support, and Clarification. Interpretations were not found to lead to the I-AES (estimated coefficients=.11, n.s.). Therapist Self-Disclosures were not found to lead to the I-AES (estimated coefficients=-.01, n.s.)

treatment outcome involves immediate outcome (i.e., *small o's*) measured by emotional elaboration by raters. Two types of interpretations were examined including transference interpretations and defense interpretations. Transference interpretations, similar to patient-therapist interpretations in McCullough et al.'s (1991) study, were operationalized as therapist statements that explain or refer to patients' experiences of the therapy relationship. Contrary to the authors' predictions, transference interpretations were not found to be significantly related to patient's emotional exploration. The results indicated that therapist interpretation of the therapeutic relationship may not be particularly helpful in deepening clients' emotional processing.

The non-significant findings on the effects of therapist interpretation of therapeutic relationships are somewhat consistent with results in a study conducted by Town, Hardy, McCullough, and Stride (2012). The authors investigated the associations between therapist interventions and patient emotional experiencing. In this study, interpretations were comprehensive and were operationalized as therapist remarks that point out a connection between two or more elements of Malan's (1979) six-item schema in which "Triangle of Conflict" refers to defenses, anxiety and impulse while "Triangle of Person" refers to therapists, past persons or current significant others. Their findings indicated that therapist intervention pertaining to interpretations was not found to contribute to patients' immediate emotional processing. In essence, their results suggested that therapist interpretations, encompassing various types of interpretations including defense interpretation in a study by Milbrath et al. (1999) and transference interpretation in studies by McCullough et al. (1991) and by Milbrath et al. (1999), were not found to be associated with emotional processing.

In reviewing research investigating the influence of interpretations on emotional processing, most of the empirical studies have focused on examining therapist interpretations based on the type or the category of interpretations. Apparently, the results in examining the effects of the types of therapist interpretations on emotional processing seemed contradictory in which patient-therapist interpretations were found to be beneficial in one study (McCullough et al., 1991) though transference interpretations were not found

to be helpful in two other studies (Milbrath et al., 1999; Town et al., 2012). While the type of interpretations can be considered as an important dimension in examining the effect of interpretations, another crucial dimension that has been overlooked is the suitability of interpretations as proposed by Silberschatz, Fretter, and Curtis (1986). Specifically, when therapists make interpretations to facilitate emotional processing, it is important to consider the alignment of the interpretations with clients' psychological needs and treatment objectives.

Silberschatz et al. (1986) hypothesized that the "plan compatibility" (i.e., how well therapist techniques are suitable for the needs of clients) of therapist interpretation would be more effective than the types of interpretation in promoting client progress in emotional processing. The results indicated that the suitability of therapist interpretations was significantly associated with the level of emotional experiencing while the category of interpretations was not correlated with the experiencing level. Despite the limitation of the small sample size of the study, the results suggested that if therapist interpretation can be compatible to client needs or problems, therapist interpretation can deepen client emotional processing.

Understanding how therapist interpretations can be compatible with client needs in facilitating emotional processing, however, can be quite complicated and may involve more than one dimension. According to Caspar et al. (2000), the plan compatibility of therapist interpretation can be further divided into what the interpretation is (i.e., the content of the interpretation) and how the interpretation is conveyed (i.e., the process of the interpretation). Follow this line of thought, Caspar et al. (2000) reanalyzed the data from Silberschatz et al.'s (1986) study. The results indicated that the correlations between the experiencing level and the aspects of plan compatibility in therapist interpretations differed across cases. Despite the limitations of the small sample size of this preliminary study, their findings suggested that the content and process of plan compatibility may serve as another dimension in understanding the influence of therapist interpretations on client emotional processing.

Taken together, while more research is needed in investigating the relative influence

of the suitability or the types of therapist interpretation in facilitating emotional processing, the research in this area points to several issues. First, client factors will need to be taken into consideration. The emphasis on attending to client factors in therapist interpretations parallels the concept of plan compatibility in Silberschatz et al.'s (1986) study. That is, in order for therapist interpretation to be effective in facilitating emotional processing, client factors such as the presenting problems of clients, the psychological needs of clients and the clients' readiness for change will need to be incorporated in selecting which types of therapist interpretations will be helpful to emotional processing. For instance, in explicating possible reasons for non-significant findings, Milbrath et al. (1999) indicated that one possible explanation may be related to the nature of the sample of bereaved clients in the study. Since clients who are experiencing grief and loss may be more concerned with the lost person rather than their relationship with therapists, therapist interpretations of therapist-client interactions may not be particularly beneficial in facilitating emotional processing with bereaved clients. The presenting problems of clients or the psychological needs of clients may affect how clients perceive therapist interpretations and thus influence the effect of therapist interpretations in deepening emotional processing. As indicated by Silberschatz et al. (1986), there is a fine line between interpretations that benefit and those that hinder emotional processing. Much depends upon how a specific client perceives or interprets the therapist interpretations.

Second, therapist intentions when using interpretations and the timing of therapist interpretations will need to be examined in facilitating emotional processing. An important factor that therapists will need to attend to is the task of emotional processing. As pointed out by Greenberg (2012), the success of emotional processing will need to involve not only emotional activation but also cognitive understanding of the emotional experiences. Thus, it is possible that therapist interpretations can be very helpful if therapists plan to achieve the task of cognitive reflection in emotional processing. On the other hand, if therapists want to attain the task of emotional exploration, therapist interpretations may not be very helpful since interpretations tend to be focused on cognitive processing and may distract clients from experiencing their inner feelings.

III. Trans-theoretical Approach

Even though identifying therapist techniques in facilitating emotional processing that are rooted in experiential therapy and psychodynamic therapy is significant, it is also crucial to find out therapist techniques across theoretical orientations that will or will not be helpful in deepening emotional processing. By doing so, therapists from various theoretical orientations will be able to utilize trans-theoretical techniques in facilitating effective emotional processing rather than being restricted to using therapist techniques that will require specific theoretical knowledge and training (Wiser & Goldfried, 1998). The following will review empirical studies that examined trans-theoretical techniques in facilitating emotional processing. Given the fact that the empirical studies investigating trans-theoretical techniques in emotional processing revolved around three main types of therapist techniques, the present article will review the empirical studies based on the three categories: supportive techniques, confrontations and therapist self-disclosures. In general, supportive techniques in emotional processing have been found to be effective in empirical research though therapist confrontations and self-disclosures have yielded inconsistent results in facilitating emotional processing in psychotherapy studies (see Table 3).

Supportive techniques. In facilitating effective emotional processing, one of the fundamental principles lies in creating a safe environment so that clients can freely explore their emotions, examine their thoughts and emotions associated with their experiences and can work through their emotions deeply in therapy process. In this vein, therapist techniques that are aimed at building a warm and trusting therapeutic relationship with clients can be beneficial and necessary in the success of emotional processing.

van der Veen (1965) studied the interdependent nature of the therapy relationship with a focus on examining the associations between therapist variables (i.e., congruence and accurate empathy) and patient variables (i.e., problem expression and immediate experiencing). The results indicated that therapist technique of accurate empathy can lead to a higher level of client emotional processing. The helpfulness of empathy in deepening

emotional processing has been demonstrated in a recent study conducted by Malin and Pos (2015). In this study, the authors investigated the effect of empathy on the working alliance, emotional processing, and treatment outcome in experiential therapy (i.e., Client-Centered Therapy and Emotion-Focused Therapy). The results indicated that therapist empathy in first sessions were significantly associated with client emotional processing during the working phase of therapy. Similar to van der Veen's (1965) findings, their results underscored the significant role of therapist empathy in promoting emotional processing.

Wiser and Goldfried (1998) conducted a naturalistic study in investigating therapist interventions trans-theoretically and client emotional processing. The results indicated that when client state moved from a non-affective to an affective focus, there is a lack of relationship between therapist interventions and client emotional processing. However, a significant association between therapist interventions and client emotional processing was found to help clients with maintaining high emotional experiencing. Specifically, the findings suggested that three therapist techniques can help clients with maintaining a high level of emotional processing: affiliative and non-controlling interventions, reflections and acknowledgments, and highlighting nonspecific client content. Their results indicated that therapist interventions that were focused on providing a supportive environment can be most beneficial in deepening emotional processing. The importance of therapist technique aiming at creating a safe place for clients to work on emotional processing has also been validated in a study that was mentioned earlier by Town et al. (2012). The results indicated that therapist techniques including Support and Clarifications led to a higher level of immediate emotional processing from clients than therapist interventions of Questions, Self-Disclosure and Information.

In sum, as research has demonstrated, therapist interventions that are focused on building a warm and trustful environment for clients can be helpful in facilitating emotional processing. These therapist techniques include accurate empathy (van der Veen, 1965), early empathy (Malin & Pos, 2015), friendly and noncontrolling interventions, reflections and acknowledgements, highlighting nonspecific client content (Wiser & Goldfried, 1998), and providing support and clarifications (Town et al. 2012). If

Table 3　Summary of Therapist Techniques in Facilitating Emotional Processing in Transtheoretical Approach

Study	Participants	Therapists	Treatment	Measures	Findings
Hill et al. (1988)	8 clients recruited through newspaper advertisements	8 experienced therapists with a minimum of 5 years postdoctoral clinical experience	individual brief psychotherapy (12 to 20 sessions)	External judges ratings on the Experiencing Scale (EXP; Klein, Mathieu-Coughlan, & Kiesler, 1986)	Therapist Response Modes were significantly related to EXP [$F(8,16275)=17.35$, $p<.0001$] and therapist Self-Disclosures led to the highest EXP.
Malin & Pos (2015)	30 clients diagnosed with major depressive disorder	16 therapists (12 clinical psychology doctoral students, 2 psychiatrists, and 3 psychologists)	Individual short-term (16-20 sessions) experiential therapy	External judges ratings on the Experiencing Scale (EXP; Klein et al., 1986)	EXP during working phase sessions was associated with expressed empathy in session one ($r=.44$, $p<.05$).
Salerno et al. (1992)	16 patients seeking psychotherapy	12 therapists (7 psychiatrists, 3 psychologists, and 2 social workers)	Individual time-limited (27 to 53 sessions) weekly psychodynamic therapy	External judges coded and counted clients' "Affective Responding"	Patients' affective responding were not found to be different following therapist confrontations of patient defenses than therapist clarification of patient defenses [($t(521)=.039$, n.s.].

Table 3   Summary of Therapist Techniques in Facilitating Emotional Processing in Transtheoretical Approach (continued)

Study	Participants	Therapists	Treatment	Measures	Findings
van der Veen (1965)	3 patients diagnosed with schizophrenia	5 therapists	2 counseling interviews were selected and the number of interviews were ranged from 17 to 57 in a 6 –month period	External judges ratings on the Experiencing Scale (Gendlin & Tomlinson, 1962)	The level of therapist accurate empathy was significantly associated with EXP (r=.54, p<.01)
Wiser & Goldfried (1998)	31 outpatients seeking psychotherapy	31 experienced therapists (18 cognitive-behavioral therapists and 13 psychodynamic-interpersonal therapists)	Therapists selected a "clinically significant" or "change" session and the average session number selected by CB and PI was the 24th and 26th respectively	External judges ratings on the Experiencing Scale (EXP: Klein et al., 1969)	Therapist affirming and affiliative interventions were related to clients' high EXP: (2)=25.06, p<.001. Therapist interventions of reflections and acknowledgments were associated with clients' EXP: (2)=12.59, p<.01. Therapist interventions of highlighting nonspecific client content were related to the high EXP: (2)=16.09, p<.001.

therapists can utilize these supportive techniques effectively, the foundation for successful emotional processing can be established. Creating a safe environment for clients to explore their emotions, however, is necessary but not sufficient since successful emotional processing also requires other factors such as reflections on the emotional experiences (Greenberg, 2012). Thus, therapist techniques aiming at enhancing various aspects of emotional processing can be influential. In this respect, empirical studies yielded mixed results regarding some techniques that were hypothesized to be beneficial to emotional processing. These techniques include therapist confrontations and self-disclosures, and below is a discussion of research pertaining to these techniques respectively.

Confrontation. In the interaction of emotional processing, one of the essential and frequently occurring issues that therapists need to deal with is how to handle clients' feelings or defenses. One of the ways to intervene is confrontation. Many controversies have been triggered on the effectiveness of confrontation and some empirical studies have examined the effects of confrontations on emotional processing.

Salerno, Farber, McCullough, Winston, and Trujillo (1992) explored the effect of therapist confrontation of patient defense (i.e., naming something that the client is unaware of or seems to be avoiding) on patient affective responding. Contrary to the authors' predictions, no significant relationship was found between therapist confrontations and immediate patient affective responding. The results of their findings, however, were not consistent with a study that was described earlier. Specifically, Town et al. (2012) found that therapist confrontations was the most frequently utilized therapeutic intervention, and the therapist technique that led to the highest level of immediate emotional processing was therapist confrontations of patients' defenses. Despite the limitations of the study such as involving only one therapist and a limited number of patients, the findings suggested that therapist confrontations can be helpful in deepening clients' emotional processing.

While the results of the empirical studies with respect to the effects of confrontations on emotional processing seemed contradictory, the preliminary evidence suggested that the effectiveness of therapist use of confrontation may depend on the number of confrontations that are utilized in facilitating emotional processing. For instance,

Salerno et al. (1992) indicated that single confrontation may not be potent enough to shatter clients' defenses, and argued that therapists may need to make several attempts at confronting clients' defenses to elicit emotional responding. Indeed, this proposition has been validated in a case study conducted by Mackay, Barkham, and Stiles (1998). Their findings suggested that the client's successful emotional processing of anger occurs through the therapist's technique of staying with the feeling in a systematic way, and one of the techniques was identified as repeatedly encouraging the client to stay with her feelings of anger. While not labeling it "confrontations," the technique of inviting clients to stay with her feelings in Mackay et al.'s (1998) study can be considered as the technique of confrontation given the fact that the therapist was naming the anger that the client seems to be avoiding; that is, the therapist was confronting the client's defenses. In other words, results suggested that therapist may need to use an optimal amount of confrontations in order to facilitate emotional processing effectively. This is consistent with the theoretical perspective that therapist confrontations will need to be utilized within a reasonable range so that clients are invited to attend to their own intra-psychic processes and access their repressed feelings in a safe and less threatening way (Devanloo, 1980; McCullough et al., 2003).

Self-disclosure. Therapist self-disclosure, in and of itself, has been a controversial intervention in psychotherapy. Similarly, empirical studies on the effect of therapist self-disclosure on emotional processing yielded different results. Hill et al. (1988) designed a naturalistic study, and examined the effects of therapist response modes on immediate outcome; one of the variables that was used to assess immediate outcome was client experiencing. Their findings indicated that therapist self-disclosures were infrequent though therapist self-disclosures led to the highest experiencing levels rated by the clients. However, the findings on the effectiveness of therapist self-disclosures in facilitating emotional processing were not in line with results from a study that was mentioned earlier. Town et al. (2012) found that therapist self-disclosure was not demonstrated to lead a higher level of immediate emotional processing as compared to therapist interventions including confrontations, support and clarifications.

The inconsistent results on the effectiveness of therapist self-disclosure in emotional processing not only reflect the controversial nature of therapist use of self-disclosure but also point to directions for future research. Specifically, while it is possible that the contradictory of the findings may result from client factors or the timing of therapist self-disclosures, one crucial factor that has been neglected in both studies pertains to the content or the type of therapist self-disclosure. Indeed, a number of prominent researchers pointed out that empirical studies in this area tend to omit the type of therapist disclosure that is being studied and thus underscored the importance of examining the effect of types of self-disclosures on therapy process and outcome (Farber, 2006; Gelso & Palma, 2011). While there is no research examining the effects of the content of therapist disclosures on emotional processing, empirical studies suggested that the content or the type of therapist self-disclosure can be influential in psychotherapy process (Nilsson, Strassberg, & Bannon, 1979). For instance, results of a study conducted by Yeh and Hayes (2011) revealed that therapist disclosure of issues that were more resolved caused the therapist to be rated as more attractive and trustworthy and instilled greater hope than therapist disclosure of less resolved issues. Given the fact that emotional processing is an integral part of psychotherapy process, it is highly possible that the content or the types of disclosures that therapists share will influence the effectiveness of emotional processing. Despite the importance of taking into account the types of disclosures in examining the effect of disclosures on emotional processing, future research will also need to attend to the issue of specificity, or what Gelso (1979) referred to as the "who, what, when, and where" question. In other words, the effect of therapist disclosure on clients' emotional processing is complex and may not only be related to the types of disclosures but also depend on other factors such as the timing of disclosures, the stage of emotional processing, clients' degree of disturbances or personality variables.

Directions for Future Research

Based on the results of the present review, the following will discuss the directions

for future research in the area of therapist interventions in deepening emotional processing rather than focusing on a particular therapist intervention. In this section, directions for future research will be discussed in terms of client factors, therapist techniques, therapist attributes and cultural considerations.

I. Client Factors

Future research will need to focus on identifying which client factors interact with therapist techniques in producing the highest level of emotional processing. In addition, client factors are strongly recommended to be incorporated in the design of the study given the fact that research suggests that client factors tend to interact with therapist variables in emotional processing. The significance of considering client factors in studying therapist techniques or therapist variables in emotional processing resonates with the concept that was mentioned earlier regarding the "who, what, when, and where" question (Gelso, 1979). For instance, in studying how therapist interpretation affects emotional processing, clients' presenting problems may play a crucial role in the effectiveness of interpretation in emotional processing. Similarly, regarding therapist use of confrontations, clients' readiness for change may affect how confrontations will be perceived in facilitating emotional processing.

II. Therapist Techniques

Future research will need to continue to investigate effective therapist techniques in emotional processing both across and within specific theoretical orientations. Given the fact that emotional processing has been recognized as a common factor, identifying effective trans-theoretical techniques in emotional processing will be very useful to clinicians from a wide range of theoretical backgrounds. On the other hand, it is also imperative to identify effective techniques within a particular theoretical orientation. As pointed out by Goldfried (2004), the implementation of common factors (such as emotional processing) in various theoretical orientations (such as cognitive-behavioral therapy) can be quite different.

In investigating therapist techniques in emotional processing, two aspects of emotional processing will need to be taken into consideration: a model of emotional processing and the principles of working with emotions. First, with respect to a model of emotional processing, Pascual-Leone and Greenberg (2007) has developed a sequential model of emotional processing in specifying the moment-by-moment progression in emotional processing and this model has been validated empirically (see Pascual-Leone & Greenberg (2007) for more detailed information). This model can be useful in shedding light on research in therapist techniques in emotional processing. For instance, supportive techniques may be crucial at the stage of *early expressions of distress* while confrontations may be essential at the stage of *advanced meaning making*. Second, with regards to the principles of emotional processing, Greenberg and Pascual-Leone (2006) reviewed research and identified four principles for working with emotion in therapy: emotion awareness and arousal, emotion regulation, emotional reflection and emotional transformation. Given the fact that emotional processing parallels working with emotions in therapy, the principles of working with emotions can be useful in guiding future research in therapist techniques in emotional processing. For instance, research can focus on investigating which therapist techniques can be useful in facilitating which principles of working with emotions in therapy. Even though the two aspects of emotional processing are rooted in experiential therapy, these concepts may be able to work in other theoretical approaches. For instance, in a very recent study conducted by Kramer et al. (2015), their results validated the sequential model of emotional processing in Short-Term Dynamic Therapy.

III. Therapist Attributes

In order to get a full picture of therapist contributions in emotional processing, knowing more about how other therapist variables may affect emotional processing is significant. In reviewing the empirical studies on therapist factors in emotional processing, most of the research was focused on examining therapist techniques and no research investigated therapist attributes or therapist characteristics. Thus, in order to advance our knowledge about emotional processing, future research will need to examine

therapist characteristics in facilitating emotional processing. Two dimensions of therapist characteristics that can be influential in emotional processing are therapist personal attributes and therapist intra-psychic attributes.

First, future research can focus on identifying which therapist personal attributes can facilitate emotional processing and which may hinder emotional processing. In order to pinpoint which therapist personal attributes will be helpful in deepening emotional processing, one of the first steps can be utilizing the empirical findings from the research in the area of working alliance. While the working alliance and emotional processing are two different concepts, therapist personal attributes that are empirically validated as effective in forming working alliance can serve as a starting point in identifying therapist personal attributes that can facilitate effective emotional processing. According to a comprehensive review conducted by Ackerman and Hilsenroth (2003), some examples of therapist personal attributes that have been found to be helpful in establishing a working alliance are therapist flexibility, experience level, confidence, interest, warmth, and openness. For instance, future research can focus on examining the associations between therapist experience level and client emotional processing. A number of theorists recommended that therapist experience level will need to be considered when using interventions to facilitate client emotional processing (Greenberg, 2002; Hill 2014).

Second, examining the role of therapist intra-psychic attributes in client emotional processing is essential in understanding therapist contributions in client emotional processing. The reason that therapist intra-psychic attributes is crucial in facilitating client emotional processing lies in the fact that emotional processing can be a highly emotional charged and emotionally intimate process in which the therapist and client interact with each other in a way that both are emotionally involved, emotionally exposed and emotionally touched by each other. Therapists will need to be emotionally sensitive, emotionally open and emotionally mature so that therapists know when to follow the lead of clients on where this process can take them to and when to take the lead in helping clients to go deeper or have a pause (Greenberg, 2002). In other words, the success of facilitating client emotional processing may not only rely on therapeutic techniques

but also depend on the intra-psychic attributes of the therapist. In reviewing research related to emotional processing, there is no empirical study examining therapist intra-psychic attributes in emotional processing. Based on theoretical discussions and clinical experiences, three therapist intra-psychic attributes that can play a significant role in client emotional processing are emotional flexibility (Pascual-Leone, 2009), emotional availability (Soderberg et al., 2014) and countertransference management ability (Van Wagoner, Gelso, Hayes, & Diemer, 1991).

IV. Cultural Considerations

Most of the discussions in this article revolved around the literature in the Western culture since no quantitative or qualitative studies in Taiwan were found that directly examined the relationship between therapist techniques and client emotional processing. It should be noted that one qualitative study in Taiwan conducted by Chen (1998) did provide initial support to some of the techniques that were examined in this article. Since the focus of the study was on clients' experience of emotional processing, the author provided limited information on therapists' techniques in facilitating emotional experiencing. However, the author reported that in one therapeutic dyad, the therapist's use of open questions, empathy and confrontations can be helpful to facilitate emotional experiencing. Even though there were some limitations in this study such as no information on the clients' presenting problems and therapists' theoretical orientations, the results of the study resonates with the findings of the present review in endorsing the effectiveness of therapists' use of supportive techniques in facilitating emotional processing.

Indeed, the lack of empirical research in the area of therapist techniques in emotional processing in Taiwan not only calls for more research in this area in the psychotherapy field in Taiwan but also points to the necessity of considering cultural factors in examining therapist techniques in client emotional processing. The significance of taking into consideration the cultural factors in studying client emotional processing or therapist techniques in emotional processing can be supported in theoretical discussions and empirical research related to the relationship between emotion and culture. As pointed

out by Kitayama and Markus (1994), "according to the current cultural perspective on emotion, culture can penetrate deeply into virtually every component process of emotion." Since emotion is a key component in emotional processing, attending to how cultural factors may affect emotional processing is imperative.

Specifically, the curative power of emotional processing across theoretical orientations may need to be further examined in the cultural context. Even though theoretical discussions or empirical studies have been silent in investigating the role of culture in emotional processing in psychotherapy, there have been some discussions on the effectiveness of emotional expressions and cultural factors in the field of personality and social psychology (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). While the concept of emotional processing is a more comprehensive one and involves more than emotional expressions, research in the area of emotional expressions can provide some directions for future research in emotional processing. For instance, research suggested that the inconsistency between the desire to express and inhibition of emotions (i.e., ambivalence over emotional expression) rather than emotional expression itself can affect a person's well-being (King & Emmons, 1990). Suh, Diener, Oishi, and Triandis (1998) further pointed out that there are cultural differences in the relationship between ambivalence over emotional expression and satisfaction with life in which individuals from collectivist cultures seem to be less affected by emotional ambivalence than people from individualist cultures. In other words, the relationship between ambivalence over emotional expression and life satisfaction may not be linear and other variables such as cultural factors may play a role in how emotional conflict may affect mental health. While more empirical studies will be needed in investigating how cultural factors may affect the relationship between ambivalence over emotional expressions and mental health, what can be drawn from the research in this area is that how emotional processing can be effective in psychotherapy in collectivist cultures will need to be further examined since culture and emotion are interconnected and the interactions between emotion and culture may affect the potency of emotional processing or how emotional processing can be conceptualized in psychotherapy in different cultures.

Conclusions

The results of the present review revealed that empirical studies in examining therapist techniques in deepening emotional processing can be categorized in three aspects: experiential therapy, psychodynamic therapy and trans-theoretical techniques. In experiential therapy, results suggested that Gestalt two-chair techniques (Greenberg & Clarke, 1979) and meaning symbolization techniques (Clarke, 1989) were two therapist techniques that have been found to be effective in deepening emotional processing. In psychodynamic therapy, the therapist technique in facilitating emotional processing that has been examined extensively was therapist interpretations; the results seemed inconclusive. Specifically, one study indicated that interpretations pertaining to patient-therapist (McCullough et al., 1991) can be helpful to emotional processing while other studies suggested that transference interpretation (Milbrath et al., 1999) or any types of interpretation (Town et al., 2012) may not be able to facilitate client emotional processing. Other dimensions of interpretation that were found to be helpful to deepen emotional processing include the plan compatibility of interpretations (Silberschatz et al., 1986), and the content and process of plan compatibility of interpretations (Caspar et al., 2000).

In addition, the present article also reviewed research that investigated trans-theoretical interventions including supportive techniques, confrontations and therapist self-disclosures. The results of the present review indicated that therapist interventions that were focused on creating a safe environment have been found to facilitate emotional processing effectively. These facilitative techniques include accurate empathy (van der Veen, 1965), early empathy (Malin & Pos, 2015), friendly and noncontrolling interventions, reflections and acknowledgements, highlighting nonspecific client content (Wiser & Goldfried, 1998), and providing support and clarifications (Town et al., 2012). The results were inconsistent pertaining to therapist techniques of confrontations and self-disclosures. With regard to confrontations, Salerno et al. (1992) found that confrontations of patient defense were not associated with emotional processing though Town et al.'s (2012) study indicated that therapist confrontations led to the highest level of emotional

processing. The inconsistent findings were applied to therapist self-disclosures. In Hill et al.'s (1988) study, therapist self-disclosures were demonstrated to be effective in facilitating emotional processing. However, Town et al. (2012) found that therapist disclosures were not associated with deepening emotional processing.

In conclusion, affect is crucial in psychotherapy. Emotional processing is a common factor in psychotherapy. Most studies focused on exploring the dynamics and the change mechanisms of emotional processing. While it is crucial to understand the change mechanisms of emotional processing, it is equally important to examine therapist contributions in emotional processing. In order to further our knowledge about emotional processing, examining therapist variables is important and having relevant information with respect to therapist interventions in emotional processing is necessary. This article reviewed empirical studies investigating therapist interventions in facilitating emotional processing and provided future directions for research in examining therapist variables and cultural factors in emotional processing. This review aims to serve as a foundation for leading future research toward uncovering more useful and effective therapeutic techniques in emotional processing.

Acknowledgement

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諮商師的技巧使用對個案情緒處理的影響：經驗學派、心理動力學派和跨理論學派的研究文獻回顧

葉芸芝

　　研究目的：情緒處理在心理治療中已被認可為有效的共通因子，但卻很少有研究探討諮商師的因素在情緒處理過程中所造成的影響。諮商師的因素可包含諮商師的特質與諮商師的技巧。由於沒有發現針對諮商師特質與情緒處理的關聯之相關研究；因此，本文的目的旨在回顧現有的關於諮商師技巧對情緒處理之影響的實證研究，並提出關於諮商師的因素、個案因素以及文化因素對於情緒處理的影響之未來研究之建議。**研究方法**：採文獻回顧的方式找出關於諮商師的技巧對於情緒處理的影響之實證研究。各個治療學派的技巧皆納入其中，包括經驗性學派、心理動力學派以及跨理論的學派。從西元1965至2016年，共有12篇已出版的實證研究文章是在探究諮商師的技巧對於情緒處理的影響。**研究結果**：在經驗性學派方面，研究指出完形治療學派的兩椅技術以及意義象徵技巧都能對情緒處理有效。跨理論的學派方面，支持性的技巧例如同理、友善和非控制的技巧以及反映和認可技術都在實證研究上被發現對於加深情緒處理有幫助。心理動力學派的解釋技巧以及跨理論學派的面質和自我坦露技巧在實證研究中則無一致性的研究結果。**研究結論**：本篇評論文章回顧現有實證研究並強調關於諮商師的因素以及文化因素在情緒處理過程中所造成的影響需要更多的研究探討，才能更深入瞭解情緒處理的有效運作機制。

關鍵詞：諮商師技巧、情緒處理、諮商師因素

葉芸芝：私立中國科技大學兼任諮商心理師；美國賓州州立大學諮商心理學博士；專長領域與研究興趣為諮商歷程研究、反移情研究、諮商員因素研究。（E-mail: yuy114@gmail.com）