

Psychotherapy process research on corrective emotional experience:  
Building a theoretical and methodological foundation

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This research is a psychotherapy process research aiming to elaborate the theory of corrective emotional experience (CEE) and to establish a methodological foundation of the empirical research. CEE repairs the traumatic effects of past experiences by having clients re-experience emotional situations that they could not deal with in a more favorable therapeutic relationship (Alexander & French, 1946). In addition, the in-session CEE can lead to changes in interpersonal relationships in the clients' life (Sharpless & Barber, 2012). CEE has long drawn attention of clinicians as one of the core change mechanisms of psychotherapy (Castonguay & Hill, 2012; Goldfried, 1980). However, empirical research on its process and effect on outcome is just the beginning. Psychotherapy process research investigates the change mechanisms of psychotherapy based on the behaviors and interactions of the therapist and the client during the sessions and their subjective experiences (Elliott, 2010; Greenberg, 1986; Iwakabe, 2008). This study uses a mixed method to gain a better understanding of the overall picture of CEE.

Chapter 1 presents the background of this research. First, the author reviewed the definitions and theories of CEE in various psychotherapy approaches and then declared that this research took the perspective of humanistic approach that focuses on the emotional experience of the client and the therapeutic relationship with the therapist. Second, the author reviewed the previous research on CEE, differentiated from similar concepts, and illuminated three components of CEE: (a) client emotional experience and its change, (b) relationship between therapist and client, and (c) experiences and changes in the client's life, which had been examined from different methods and perspectives. Finally, the author pointed out the need for combining different methods and perspectives to capture CEE as a whole.

Chapter 2 presents the purposes of this study. The first purpose was to build a CEE model which added the components related to the relationship between the therapist and the client into client emotional change process by using task analysis. The second purpose was to develop the scale to pick up efficiently from the client's perspective how the components of CEE appear during each session based on the CEE model. The third purpose was (a) to verify the CEE model and (b) to examine how in-session CEE could lead to changes in client's life by using a systematic case study.

Then, chapter 2 also outlines an overall methodology and explains the rationale for adopting both task analysis and systematic case study method. In addition, the author pointed out that this research can contribute to (a) promoting the understanding of change mechanism in psychotherapy, (b) developing case study methodologies, and (c) providing findings to explain the outcome and process of psychotherapy.

Chapters 3 to 5 presented research findings from 3 studies related to each of the above research purposes. In study 1, in order to achieve the first purpose, three resolved events and three unresolved events of CEE were analyzed qualitatively. As a result, an empirical model of CEE was generated in which intrapersonal change process of the client and interpersonal change process with the therapist proceed in parallel. In addition,

experiential and relational interventions as therapist intervention principles which facilitated those changes were identified.

In study 2, in order to achieve the second purpose, 182 responses from 8 participants were analyzed. As a result, the CEE scale consisted of four factors in within level and one factor in between level. The internal consistency and the criterion-related validity of the scale in within level were confirmed.

In study 3, in order to achieve the third purpose, a valuable case data which informed in- and outside-session subjective experiences of the client was used. From the qualitative analysis of the client's description of in- and outside-session experiences, six categories were generated as in-session CEEs, which confirmed the empirical model of CEE. In addition, three categories were generated as outside-session experiences, which suggested that positive emotions were a key component connecting in- and outside-session CEEs. These findings were also supported from quantitative analysis of the outcome and process measures.

Chapter 6 provides an integrative discussion of three studies. First, the author discusses four ways in which this research project contributed to the understanding of CEE; (a) by elucidating an interaction between the client emotional change and deepening relationship with the therapist, (b) by emphasizing making core painful emotions and related negative beliefs of the client and implicit relational experiences between the therapist and the client explicit, (c) by illuminating the role of positive emotions in client change, and (d) by identifying client strength and energy as a driver of change in interpersonal relationships. Second, the significance and the issues of the CEE research methods used in this study were summarized. Third, the author made suggestions for clinical practice. Finally, the author described the limitations of this research and future directions.