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Andrew M. Bland

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Facilitating and Assessing Personal Growth in Helper Development Using Hart's (2014) *Four Virtues*

Andrew M. Bland
Millersville University

During the last decade, calls have been made for a paradigm shift in the training of helping professionals to include an increased emphasis on developing the helper as a person in addition to honing technical proficiency. Models by Ridley et al. (2011), Geller and Greenberg (2012), and Fauth et al. (2007) have identified characteristics and provided working definitions of intrapersonal helper competencies and attributes. However, these are only a descriptive starting point. More work remains in their practical implementation in helper training and research thereupon, as well as in developing appropriate tools for assessing helpers' capacities in these areas. One exception to this dearth of helper-as-person assessment tools is Hart and Hart's (2014) *Spiritual Assessment Matrix* (SAM)—which is based on Hart's (2014) *Four Virtues*, a model of personal growth that encourages balance among the 4 interdependent qualities of *presence*, *heart*, *wisdom*, and *creation*. In this article, I reflect upon my employment of Hart's model and the SAM to promote intrapersonal and interpersonal competence in master's students enrolled in an entry-level graduate course in *Psychotherapy and Intervention Skills*. After surveying Hart's model, I describe the method by which the students completed and reflected upon the results of the SAM before and after supervised experience with a client. Next, I provide a thematic analysis of the students' end-of-semester reflections with connections made to extant helper development literature. Finally, I discuss implications of Hart's model and assessment for helper training while addressing its limitations and provide suggestions for further research.

Keywords: helper development, counselor/therapist training, personal growth, humanistic education, humanistic counseling/therapy, helper-as-person, thematic analysis

During the last decade, calls have been made for a paradigm shift in the training of helping professionals to include an increased emphasis on developing the helper as a person in addition to honing technical proficiency (e.g., Geller & Greenberg, 2012; Regas, Kostick, Bakaly, & Doonan, 2017; Smith-Hansen, 2016). This comes following several

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Andrew M. Bland, Department of Psychology, Millersville University, Susan P. Luek Hall Room 223-A, P.O. Box 1002, Millersville, PA 17551. E-mail: andrew.bland@millersville.edu

decades in which the focus of the training curriculum has principally entailed mastery of appropriate *interpersonal* microskills (e.g., rapport building, joining, and active listening skills) and of experiential/affective, cognitive, and behavioral intervention strategies. Undoubtedly, these skills are essential. On the other hand, “these techniques focus more on the content of the [helper’s] communication [and] may or may not facilitate [helpers’] quality of being” (Gehart & McCollum, 2008, p. 178). Researchers have suggested that prescriptive emphasis on helper behaviors does not necessarily translate into sustainable client outcomes (see Coll, Doumas, Trotter, & Freeman, 2013; Kramer, Meleo-Meyer, & Turner, 2008; Ridley, Mollen, & Kelly, 2011), and in extreme cases, the results can actually be detrimental (see Fauth, Gates, Vinca, Boles, & Hayes, 2007).

Sustainable transformative change requires helpers to reflexively understand and mirror clients’ unique patterns of lived experience and suffering (see Bland, 2013). For helpers to employ appropriate degrees of spontaneity, authenticity, and intentionality, it is essential that their training facilitate its development, inviting them to “notice the ‘between’ of relationship” (Kramer et al., 2008, p. 205) characterized by involvement of the whole person of the helper, balanced expression of engaged compassion and equanimity, and attention to both their and their clients’ immediate experience (Gehart & McCollum, 2008). Otherwise, rigid adherence to technique becomes crystallized and operates as a mechanical “shield to avoid intimacy with a client” (Kottler, 2003, p. 7) that typically reflects helpers’ difficulty with ambiguity and appropriate risk-taking (Kottler & Shepard, 2015).

Extant Conceptualizations of Intrapersonal Competence in Helper Development

As a result of the aforementioned paradigm shift in helper training within the last decade, several suggestions and schematic models have been proposed for the development of *intrapersonal* dispositions as aspects of helpers’ competence that are just as vital as their interpersonal skill abilities. Some of the proposals pertain to the interdependent relationship between intrapersonal competencies and therapeutic process variables (*more therapeutic relationship oriented*); others address the characteristic personal qualities of and processes within the helper who serves as a conduit of effective client change (*more helper-as-person oriented*).

On the relationship-oriented side of the continuum, Ridley et al. (2011) proposed a mandala-like holistic hierarchy of helper abilities that subsumes trainees’ behavioral (i.e., microskills) competencies and also includes helpers’ cognitions, affect, and attitudes. These are dynamically coordinated by an “integrated deep structure” made up of five metacognitions (Ridley et al., 2011, p. 849). First, *purposefulness* refers to helpers’ sense of intentionality (i.e., choosing words carefully when interacting with clients, deeply reflecting between sessions, and appropriately seeking supervision/consultation to maximize benefit to clients). Second, *motivation* refers to managing the therapeutic process and striving to overcome personal obstacles (e.g., burnout, problematic countertransference, anxiety) that might occlude positive change. Third, *selection* refers to deciding which competencies should be used or not used based on their relevance in accordance with attunement to individual clients’ needs. Fourth, *sequencing* refers to helpers’ ability to execute the selected competencies in an appropriate order (e.g., not confronting clients before building rapport). Fifth, *timing* refers to pacing the execution of selected competencies (e.g., spacing confrontations to avoid overwhelming clients). As a dynamic,

individualized model for training and supervision, Ridley et al. suggested that it should be tailored to trainees' unique personal and cultural contexts, developmental needs and processes, and so forth.

On the other, helper-as-person side of the continuum, Geller and Greenberg's (2012) three-tiered model of therapeutic presence was based on phenomenological themes derived from their Delphi study involving interviews with master therapists. The first tier, *preparing the ground for presence*, includes: (a) attention on a day-to-day level to self-care and personal needs/concerns, philosophical commitment to presence and personal growth, practice of presence in daily life and relationships, and meditation/spiritual practice; and (b) prior to or at the beginning of a session, clearing a space for presence, letting go of self-concerns/issues, bracketing assumptions, and intentionally cultivating an attitude of openness, interest, acceptance, and nonjudgment. The second tier, the *process of presence*, includes: (a) kinesthetic, sensory, physical, emotional, and mental receptivity (i.e., listening with the third ear) to the experience of a session, which serves to usher clients into their own sense of being; (b) inward attending (i.e., self-as-instrument; attunement to possibilities for spontaneous, creative, authentic responding; and ability to return to the present moment when distracted); and (c) extending and contact (i.e., accessibility, transparency, and intuitive responding). The third tier, the *experience of presence*, includes (a) grounding (feeling centered, steady, and whole while also trusting and at ease with the process); (b) immersion (nonattached absorption and deep experiencing with the client, as well as present-centered awareness, alertness, and focus); (c) expansion (sense of timelessness, spaciousness; enhanced awareness of sensation and perception and energized, flowing quality of thought and emotional experiencing); and (d) being with and for the client (intention for clients' healing; awe, wonder, warmth, compassion, love; and absence of ego involvement or self-consciousness).

Toward the center of this continuum, Fauth et al. (2007) proposed that helper training should focus on the development of therapeutic responsiveness via experiential practice that develops two metacognitive skills on an individualized basis. First, *pattern recognition* refers to discerning and effectively responding to the most salient events and experiences in clients' narratives within a given interview based on the degree to which they deviate from both a particular client's typical baseline and the baseline for clients in general. Second, *mindfulness* "represents sustained attention toward the immediate experience of the session, accompanied by an attitude of acceptance and compassion, as opposed to judgment, toward all that arises" (Fauth et al., 2007, pp. 386–387). Mindfulness lends itself to increased empathy and compassion toward self and others, management of negative emotional reactions toward clients, and thus prevention of problematic countertransference insofar as it encourages helpers' development of the "ability to attend to, learn from, and make use of their reactions without the complications of shame, blame, or remorse" (p. 387).

Taken together, these models lay the groundwork for facilitating helpers' capacities for self-awareness, self-reflection, self-care, self-compassion, stamina, and resilience—which together form the personal foundation for effective helping (Cormier, Nurius, & Osborn, 2013; see also Coll et al., 2013)—as part of the training process. The models serve as alternatives to a training climate in which instrumental technical training of interpersonal skills may counterproductively reinforce high levels of helper anxiety—which is negatively associated with helper self-efficacy, adversely impacts empathy and helper performance, and decreases the likelihood of sharing experiences in, and therefore appropriately benefitting from, supervision (Fulton & Cashwell, 2015).

Purpose

As beneficial as the previously mentioned models are for identifying characteristics and developing working definitions of intrapersonal helper competencies/attributes, they are only a descriptive starting point. Much more work remains in their practical implementation in helper training—and research thereupon (Fauth et al., 2007)—to cultivate and sustain helpers' self-awareness (Coll et al., 2013), empathy and self-compassion (Fulton & Cashwell, 2015), and abilities to “access [their] own natural resources and somatic awareness as a tool for facilitation of technique” (Geller & Greenberg, 2012, p. 260).

In particular, appropriate tools for assessing helpers' capacities in these areas need to be developed. While some helper development rubrics and rating scales (e.g., Hatcher & Lassiter, 2007) contain a well-intentioned handful of items related to self-awareness, those items are generally overshadowed by an abundance of items that pertain to technical proficiency. In the meantime, there are relatively few scales that comprehensively appraise the helper-as-person. When they do exist, they tend to be highly specialized and are conceptually incomplete. For example, such measures have more to do with helper attitudes (e.g., Corey et al., as cited in Coll et al., 2013) than with personal characteristics of helpers themselves. In addition, Fulton and Cashwell (2015) pointed out that although measures of mindfulness are increasingly abundant (e.g., see Brown & Ryan's *Mindful Attention Awareness Scale*, Baer et al.'s *Five-Facet Mindfulness Questionnaire*, and Lau et al.'s *Toronto Mindfulness Scale* included in Labbé, 2011), they generally focus more on the cognitive awareness aspects of mindfulness without due consideration given to its “heart” qualities, such as compassion.

One notable exception to this dearth of helper-as-person assessment tools is Hart and Hart's (2014) *Spiritual Assessment Matrix* (SAM)—which is based on Hart's (2014) *Four Virtues*, a model of personal growth and psycho-spiritual development that encourages balance among the four interdependent qualities of *presence*, *heart*, *wisdom*, and *creation* (i.e., creativity). In this article, I reflect upon my employment of Hart's model and the SAM to promote intrapersonal and interpersonal competence in master's students enrolled in an entry-level graduate course in *Psychotherapy and Intervention Skills*. After surveying Hart's model, I describe the method by which the students completed and reflected upon the results of the SAM before and after supervised experience with a client. Next, I provide a thematic analysis of the students' end-of-semester reflections with connections made to extant helper development literature. Finally, I discuss implications of Hart's model and assessment for helper training while addressing its limitations, and I provide suggestions for further research.

Hart's Four Virtues

Hart (2014) identified and described four interdependent virtues (i.e., attributes) that serve as a foundation for personal growth and psycho-spiritual development. Each virtue has four subfactors. The first virtue, *presence*, refers to here-and-now awareness and openness to experience. Its subfactors are sensing, focusing, witnessing, and opening. The second virtue, *heart*, refers to the capacities for understanding, passion, and care. It is composed of the subfactors of compassion, empathy, feeling (i.e., emotional intelligence), and connectedness. The third virtue, *wisdom*, refers to seeing into the heart of things and finding knowledge that guides choice and action. Its subfactors are openness to possibility



Figure 1. A visual depiction of a person whose profile demonstrates balance (“centeredness,” or optimal functioning) among Hart’s four virtues. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

and to guidance, cognitive clarity, and balanced discernment. The fourth virtue, *creation*, pertains to finding one’s voice and a sense of confidence in creative expression in the world. Its subfactors are balanced will and willingness (i.e., humility), originality/authenticity, imagination, and sense of calling. The subfactors are described in more detail in the Findings section below.

Visually, the four virtues make up four quadrants, and levels of development are represented by concentric circles (with lower levels of development at the outer layers and higher levels at the inner layers). The more each virtue is developed, the more “centered” (i.e., balanced) and optimally functioning the person is (Figure 1). Hart (2014) emphasized that equilibrium among the four virtues is key and that one or more qualities out of balance can lead a person to becoming ineffective. Thus, when the virtues are out of balance, the more fragmented the person’s profile appears (Figure 2).



Figure 2. When the four virtues are out of balance, a person’s profile appears fragmented. In this case, too much affective empathy (*heart*) is offset by too little cognitive empathy or discernment (*wisdom*). This is a common imbalance among beginning helpers, who are prone to confusing sympathy for empathy. See the online article for the color version of this figure.

Applied to the helping professions, too much affective empathy (*heart*) but too little cognitive empathy or discernment (*wisdom*) is a common imbalance among beginning helpers, who are prone to confusing sympathy for empathy (Kottler & Shepard, 2015). Buddhist psychologists refer to this imbalance as *idiot compassion*, the “well-intentioned but ineffectual kindness that does not help others cut through their confusion but instead supports the habitual patterns and ego-clinging that perpetuates their suffering” (Wegela, 2009, pp. 80–81). In other cases, a beginning helper may possess strong intellectual skills (high *wisdom*) but low *presence*, which results in impeccable case conceptualizations during supervision but also difficulty effectively attending and responding to clients’ inner experience in session.

Hart and Hart’s (2014) SAM

Hart and Hart’s (2014) SAM measures individuals’ balance among the four virtues. Hart’s (2014) *Four Virtues* book contains a 160-item version of the SAM that consists of 10 items for each of the four subfactors associated with each of the four virtues. In addition, a briefer computer adaptive version is available online (<http://thefourvirtues.com/survey>). It contains 96 items (24 items over four screens). Sample items include:

- *Presence*: “I am comfortable in silence”; “I am aware of what my body is telling me”; “I am not easily distracted”; “I am present to what is going on around me”; “I can maintain concentration easily”; “I find myself watching my own behavior, thoughts, or feelings”; “I can step into or back from my feelings”; and “I am receptive.”
- *Heart*: “I am kind and nurturing to myself”; “I let myself have all my feelings, including difficult ones”; “I can regulate my personal boundaries”; “I accept others without judgment”; “I can see through another’s point of view”; “I seem to pick up on others’ vibes”; “I have a rich feeling vocabulary”; “I am tolerant and patient toward my own limitations and mistakes”; and “I find ways to express my feelings constructively.”
- *Wisdom*: “I see old problems in new ways”; “I take constructive risks”; “I befriend the unknown”; “I know whom I can ask for help and advice, and I ask them”; “I listen and sense my inner voice”; “I stay open to new information”; “I can step back and look at an issue from arm’s length”; “I have a signal that helps me know what’s right”; and “I can see the forest and the trees.”
- *Creation*: “I allow things to unfold”; “I follow through and get things done”; “I persevere through challenging issues”; “I can say no with little difficulty”; “My actions are congruent with my insides”; “I can be assertive without being aggressive”; “I think outside the box”; “I sense under the surface of things”; and “I like stories.”

On both versions of the SAM, users rate statements on a 5-point scale (1 = “*least like me*”; 5 = “*most like me*”). Factor scores for each virtue as well as for each subfactor are provided, along with categorical descriptions ranging from “A trailhead” (i.e., minimally developed) to “More is possible” (i.e., somewhat developed) to “A good ally” (i.e., moderately developed) to “A great strength” (i.e., greatly developed).

Method

Data Collection

Toward the beginning of the semester in an entry-level master's course in *Psychotherapy and Intervention Skills* at a mid-Atlantic state university, I asked students to write reflective journals based on their choice of three questions pertaining to helper motives and goals posed in their primary course textbook (Cormier et al., 2013) that they found particularly relevant. Question options included but were not limited to:

- “What is it about the helping profession that is attractive to you or enticing for you?”
- “What is anxiety-provoking to you about the work or lifestyle of a professional helper?”
- “What have you learned about yourself by having experienced tragedy, trauma, or types of personal pain and injustices at some point in your life? What more do you have to learn about yourself as a result of such pain?”
- “Which of your personal qualities do you believe will serve you well as a helping professional?”
- “What aspects of yourself (e.g., being ‘rough around the edges’) do you need to work on in order for you to be a helping practitioner? How do you see yourself addressing those traits?”
- “How do you handle being in conflict? Being confronted? Being evaluated? What defenses do you use in these situations?”
- “How would someone who knows you well describe your style of helping or caring?” (Cormier et al., 2013, p. 7)

After writing responses to the three questions they selected, the students were asked to complete the online SAM, to display the results in a table, and to write reflections on the results. Specifically, they were asked to discuss: (a) the degree to which they agreed/disagreed with their scores (based on the descriptions of the virtues and subfactors provided on the SAM results and debriefing screen), particularly those in which they scored highest and lowest; (b) any specific items on the SAM that stood out to them and how those related to the results; and (c) how they could employ their strengths (higher-scoring areas) to address their areas for growth (lower-scoring areas) and bring any off-balance domains into center. Finally, I asked the students to draw connections between their SAM results and the three questions from their primary textbook that they selected and addressed. When providing feedback on the students' journals, in addition to supportive comments and thought-provoking questions, I calculated their median SAM scores and pointed out my observations on potential connections between their reflections and the above- and below-median SAM scores.

Next, following several weeks spent exploring and role playing active listening, attending, and basic intervention skills, the graduate students began working individually with volunteer clients at midsemester. They met with me for biweekly individual supervision in addition to attending class. They also continued to write reflective journals on the process of the course. Throughout this time, I made references to the students' SAM results in my supervisory or journal feedback in response to critical moments in their work with their clients, and in a number of cases, the students volunteered such connections as well.

As the semester came to a close, I asked the students to complete a second online SAM assessment following termination with their clients. In their final journal assignment, they

compared and contrasted the scores from their initial and final SAM assessments (pre- and post-client work), and they reflected on what had changed and what had remained relatively stable based on their experience in the course and how they planned to incorporate that self-knowledge in their future work. In addition, I asked the students to complete the 36-item *Riso-Hudson Enneagram Type Indicator (RHETI) Sampler* (Riso & Hudson, 2009; <http://www.essenceinstitute.com/rheti-sampler>), which is based on the enneagram system of personality development (see Bland, 2010). The students then explored the connections between their SAM scores and the stress/safety and growth dynamics associated with their core enneagram orientations.

Analysis

This study did not set out to prove or disprove hypotheses; rather, my intention was to generate phenomenological data that addressed the principal research question of how the students experienced and/or demonstrated intrapersonal and interpersonal growth via their training experience using Hart's Four Virtues model. Specifically, I was curious about how the SAM assignments both contributed to and reflected the growth of the helper-as-person as part of the professional development process. Following two semesters in which I employed the SAM assignment in my course, I conducted a thematic analysis (see Braun & Clarke, 2006) of the students' end-of-semester reflections to identify "what is common to the way a topic [was] written about" and to "[make] sense of those commonalities" (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 57). Thematic analysis "involves more than simply reporting what is in the data" (Clarke & Braun, 2014a, p. 6626). Rather, it "highlights the most salient constellations" (Joffe, 2012, p. 209) of "patterned meaning" (Clarke & Braun, 2014b, p. 1948) to "develop a set of logical themes and associated . . . subthemes which together form a 'story'" (Tuckett, 2005, p. 76) that "[emphasizes] subjective experience [and safeguards participants'] reality" (Joffe, 2012, p. 220).

As noted by Attride-Stirling (2001), data are reduced into meaningful segments of text which are coded and explored. Themes are then abstracted, integrated, and arranged into thematic networks. Thematic analysis requires active reflexivity on researchers' part "to identify salient patterns through the knowledge and perspectives [they] bring to the data" (Braun et al., 2014, p. 196) by "[situating the analysis] in relation to existing scholarly literature" (Braun et al., 2014, p. 195; see also Aronson, 1995). In this study, I focused on how the students' writing reflected their incremental development of balance among Hart's Four Virtues, with connections made to common concerns and normative developmental tasks of beginning helpers as discussed in the extant helper development literature.

I identified "collective or shared meanings and experiences" that inhered "across" the phenomenological data presented in the journals (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 57). With regard to the question of prevalence of themes in the data (i.e., student journals), Braun and Clarke (2006) highlighted that "the 'keyness' of a theme is not necessarily dependent on quantifiable measures" (p. 82). That is:

A theme might be given considerable space [by participants] in some data items, and little or none in others, or it might appear in relatively little of the data set. . . . [Rather, emphasis is given to whether a theme] captures something important in relation to the overall research question . . . so that the reader gets a sense of the predominant or important [issues]. (pp. 82–83)

During the analysis procedure (described in more depth below), I was particularly attuned to commonalities and differences in the data to decide which portions of the journals

should be included in the analysis and which ones were peculiar to individual students' concerns/personality structure and should be filtered out. To aid this process, I carefully attended to the relationships between students' SAM and RHETI Sampler scores and how these were discussed and otherwise reflected in their writing. For an example of an excluded statement, one student whose enneagram profile suggested a particularly strong propensity toward meticulousness, fear of making mistakes, and agitation under stress wrote:

If I ignore my tendency to be a perfectionist, I could unconsciously transfer my need to be perfect onto my client. I can see myself becoming frustrated if my client does not completely discontinue maladaptive behaviors, which also goes along with [my] impatience.

In this case, compared with the other students' statements pertaining to overcoming beginner's anxiety and second-guessing oneself (within Theme 3), this one seems to relate more directly to an individual student's disposition. Therefore, quotations like this were kept out.

Throughout my analysis, I also noted the students' own hermeneutic meaning-making process (see Arons, in Barrell et al., 1987) as a result of having completed the SAM assessments before and after the experience of working with a client for the first time. For example, Student 8 remarked, "I think the score change has more to do with my having a better understanding of myself, and what these terms truly mean, rather than any huge decline or increase in my skill base." Specifically, the students' understanding of and appreciation for qualities of effective helping deepened as a result of their experience:

Student 9: "When I began this class (and took [the SAM] for the first time), I felt that I answered the questions based off of what I knew the skills of a therapist *should be* [emphasis added]. Now that is not saying that the scores on my first [SAM] were not true, I just feel as if throughout the course of this class I have realized that I am not a robot therapist, and learning the skills is a process and not something you just acquire. So, in an effort to work on my 'person of the therapist,' I have taken this class very seriously in hopes to become more open to not only learn how I can best help a client, but, also how clients (and the work of a therapist in general) affect me. And, through this I feel that I have opened myself up for growth in the sections of Presence and Heart, which undoubtedly then lowered the 'ideal' scores that I had initially been given at the beginning of the semester."

Participants

After receiving approval from the institutional review board (IRB) and permission from the individual students, I analyzed journals completed by 17 master's students enrolled in Clinical Psychology ($n = 8$) and School Psychology ($n = 9$) programs during two semesters. Two of the students were men, and 15 were women. All of the students were White.

Procedure

Arguably valuable on account of its "flexibility" as a method unbound by the assumptions of a specific theoretical/philosophical or epistemological framework (Braun, Clarke, & Rance, 2014, p. 185; see also Joffe, 2012), methodologists have made the case that thematic analysis "should be considered a method in its own right" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 78). Researchers select an internally consistent "theoretical framework and methods [that] match what [they] want to know" and are thereby expected to "acknowledge . . . and recognize [those decisions] as decisions" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 80).

For the current analysis, I analyzed the journals that the students completed at the conclusion of the semester, after having taken the SAM for the second time. Thematic analysis was used deductively, with Hart's Four Virtues model serving as a guiding framework for *initially* organizing the data (that is, material illustrating aspects of Presence, Heart, Wisdom, and Creation was sorted into respective categories.) Thereafter, congruent with Joffe's (2012) observation that realistically "one utilizes [deductive and inductive analyses] together," themes were inductively demarcated from "naturalistically occurring themes evident in the data" (p. 210). Then, in the final phases of analysis, these themes were set back into and triangulated with the more nuanced aspects (i.e., subfactors) of Hart's model in conjunction with the extant helper development literature. Coding and analysis were principally conducted at the semantic and essentialist levels (see Braun et al., 2014), though occasionally latent meanings were highlighted.

My initial exposure to the data came when I reviewed the journals as part of the *Psychotherapy and Intervention Skills* course. At that point, being in "teacher/supervisor mode," I focused on providing relevant feedback to the individual students' narratives and offering comments in Track Changes (the journals had been submitted as Word documents). Several months later, in preparation for this study, I removed the Track Changes and reread each journal with fresh eyes in "researcher mode." (This constituted the first phase of Braun & Clarke's [2006] steps to thematic analysis, *familiarizing yourself with the data*.) During yet another reading, I provided initial codes based on, as noted earlier, how the students' writing connected with one of Hart's Four Virtues. Next, I returned to the digital copies and extracted (i.e., copied and pasted) portions of the individual journals that corresponded with the specific virtues into a new, composite Word document, after which I reflexively coded the material that illustrated normative attributes of beginning helper development and/or effective helping that are common in the literature. I also returned to my Track Changes feedback and worked in relevant interpretative comments for the latent themes. (This constituted the second phase, *generating initial codes*.)

From there, I returned to the electronic composite document, maneuvered the material in accordance with my initial coding, and began collating the coded data into potential themes. (This constituted the third phase, *searching for themes*.) Next, I went through the quotations twice, removing extraneous material as needed, occasionally recoding some data, consolidating (i.e., "splicing and linking," Joffe & Yardley, 2004, p. 61) some themes into broader, more overarching categories in cases where there was substantial overlap, and parsing others when conceptual elaboration was in order. With each step of the analysis, new Word documents were created to enable me to revisit earlier drafts as needed. (This constituted the fourth phase, *reviewing themes*.) Note that, throughout this phase, I employed a recursive and "organic" process of coding and deriving themes from the data in lieu of using a predetermined coding system (Braun et al., 2014, p. 190). "Coding evolved as [the analysis] progressed" (Braun et al., 2014, p. 190) until I was "satisfied that the individual themes [were] coherent and the themes together addressed the research question in a meaningful way and captured the most relevant features of the data" (Clarke & Braun, 2014b, p. 1951).

Once themes had been thoroughly reviewed and finalized, I mapped them in relation to each other to form a coherent sequential narrative (though, it should be noted, the themes more realistically portrayed a holistic unfolding process and not a linear chain of events). I then provided labels for the themes based on phrases commonly employed in the helper development literature (because "data must be interpreted and connected to your broader research questions and to the scholarly fields your work is situated within," Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 67). Next, I developed definitions for each theme—with parallels cited

between the theme and the corresponding subfactor(s) in Hart's model—to “tell the story of each theme, its central concept, scope and boundaries, and how it relates to the other themes and to the research question” (Clarke & Braun, 2014b, p. 1951). In addition, for each virtue, as well as for the entire analysis, I developed summary statements that drew conclusions and made “interconnections between themes and [that said] something overall about the dataset” (Braun & Clarke, 2012, p. 67). (This constituted the fifth phase, *defining and naming themes*.) Finally, to accompany parallels I had noted between the themes in the students' journals and their counterpart virtues/subfactors in Hart's Four Virtues model, I triangulated the thematic material with the extant intrapersonal helper development models surveyed at the beginning of this article, as well as additional extant literature. (This constituted the sixth phase, *producing the report*.)

Findings

In the interest of fidelity to the students' thick description (see Levitt, Motulsky, Wertz, Morrow, & Ponterotto, 2017), I have opted to allow their own words to speak for themselves as much as possible. My own comments serve more to provide appropriate context and/or points of triangulation with Hart's model and the aforementioned extant literature on helper development.

Presence

Theme 1: Here-and-now awareness. This theme parallels Hart's *sensing* subfactor, which refers to intimate contact with oneself and one's surrounding environment. Throughout the course, I introduced the students to numerous mindfulness-based techniques to cultivate their present awareness—some of which they practiced in class, prior to meeting with their clients, and, as appropriate, with their clients. In their reflections, several of the students commented that at the beginning of the semester their competence in the area of *presence* was low but that it had increased substantially by the end of the semester. For example:

Student 13: “Presence was the weakest of all my virtues [at the beginning of the semester] and it has increased greatly. I think this was most affected by both the mindfulness activities and the process of learning to be present in my sessions with my volunteer client. Before this course, I found it difficult to focus my attention because I was distracted by previous happenings or worried about the future ones. Mindfulness allowed me to slow down and use my senses to become attuned to things that I would not have seen before.”

Student 15: “I think that my low score in the beginning of the semester was because I was going through life very quickly, rarely taking the time to stop and appreciate the beauty around and within me.”

The mindfulness-based techniques appear to have facilitated the students' abilities to *clear a space*—that is, to “put aside personal concerns, needs, and experiences from daily life . . . to create room for contact with inner experiencing” (Geller & Greenberg, 2012, p. 86). In addition, by slowing down, the students became better able to make full use of their sensory capacities to attune to their surroundings, which Rogers (1961/1995) identified as characteristic of optimally functioning people. Applied to helping, here-and-now awareness is conducive to an enhanced sense of attention to detail in clients' narratives and nonverbal behaviors which in turn enhances therapeutic responsiveness.

Theme 2: Attunement to self and others. This theme parallels Hart’s *focusing* and *witnessing* subfactors—which pertain, respectively, to the abilities to steady and shift attention (i.e., self-regulation) and to observe one’s thoughts, feelings, and sensations without getting lost in them. As the semester progressed, the students often reported in their journals and during class discussions and supervision meetings that they found themselves more invested in and committed to using meditation practice to improve their presence as they prepared for sessions, which set the stage for this theme. By virtue of an enhanced sense of concentration on what is most immediate, the students were better able to “focus on what [was] emerging and relevant to the experience of the moment” when interacting with their clients (Geller & Greenberg, 2012, p. 125). Such attunement is crucial to providing effective and authentic responding. Rogers (1957/2007) noted that helpers’ experience:

may be “I am afraid of this client” or “My attention is so focused on my own problems that I can scarcely listen to [the client].” If the [helper] is not denying these feelings to awareness, but is able freely to be them . . . then the [facilitative] condition [of *genuineness*] is met. (p. 242)

Otherwise, helpers run the risk of providing stereotyped, preordained, or otherwise mechanical responses (see DeCarvalho, 1991) that keep them solidly in the expert role but may not successfully meet the demands of the situation and thereby truncate the depth and quality of the therapeutic relationship as a vehicle for change.

In addition, the students reported that consistent mindfulness-based practice helped them become better able to recognize when they were becoming distracted when working with clients—usually out of concern about what to say or do next—and thus better able to refocus at will. For example:

Student 8: “Through practicing with my client, I was able to start realizing when my thoughts were wondering and was able to calmly bring myself back to the present in listening to my client. It was not something I had thought about before seeing my client but I quickly learned the skill as our sessions progressed.”

Geller and Greenberg (2012) normalized the phenomenon of the struggle to be present and its consequences for the therapeutic relationship. They suggested that in some cases such distractions can suggest countertransference responses (e.g., something in a client’s narrative serves as an affective trigger for the helper). “When [helpers] are able to recognize, without judgment, their reactions to clients, no matter how unpleasant or painful, they may be less likely to act out on countertransference thoughts and feelings” (Fauth et al., 2007, p. 387). Likewise, the more attuned the helper is to these distractions, the more they not only can smoothly return to the present moment but also “explore and resolve whatever issues emerged, either in supervision or with a therapist” (Geller & Greenberg, 2012, p. 105) in the interest of preventing overidentification with client issues that can pose barriers to their effectiveness in the future (see Schwartz & Flowers, 2010; also Bien, 2008; Rogers, 1957/2007; Skovholt & Rivers, 2007).

Furthermore, meditation aided the students’ abilities to look past irrelevant details in their clients’ narratives and attune more directly and empathically to their clients’ immediate experiencing. In one instance, a student described becoming more aware of her client’s anxiety as she became better able to regulate her own:

Student 12: “I am more conscious of completing one thing at a time without other distractions. I also needed to hone these skills when working with my client because she talked very fast

and changed topics easily. I've learned to focus on the feelings of others as well as the content."

Geller and Greenberg (2012) described this sense of *receptivity* as the helper's "ability to bring the client into one's being [while maintaining] contact with his or her own integrated self [in order to understand] the client's unsaid experience" (pp. 95–96). By focusing on the emotions that underlay the specifics of their clients' narratives, the students were better able to gain their clients' trust and respect as they became better adept at cutting through clients' defenses and reflecting and addressing more basic concerns.

Moreover, working with clients helped the students become more comfortable with their own emotional experience as they worked with their clients':

Student 5: "Over the past few weeks I have [attempted] to let myself feel my emotions as I have them."

The more that helpers are mindful of their experience—even when it runs counter to what they think they *should* or *should not* feel as helpers, for example, boredom or impatience—the more effective they can be in empowering clients to be themselves by way of their authentic responses (Bien, 2008; Rogers, 1957/2007; Welwood, 2000). Such transparency and congruence can "initiate a powerful healing process for the client in hearing the [helper's] honest and genuine feelings [in a way that is] not infused with the [helper's] agenda" (Geller & Greenberg, 2012, p. 107).

Theme 3: Overcoming biases and developing comfort in one's skin as a helper. This theme parallels Hart's *opening* subfactor, which allows individuals to overcome habitual patterns of perception and to see in new ways. In addition to the affective outcomes of mindfulness-based practice, students also reported several cognitive elements of mindfulness that were conducive to effective therapy. First, they found themselves better able to let go of the need to compulsively plan out their sessions in advance and instead to meet the demands of the moment and to employ *bracketing*—that is, suspension of preconceptions, categorizations, theories, or plans that can get in the way of helpers' abilities to enable clients to have contact with what is real and true for them in the moment of the session (Geller & Greenberg, 2012):

Student 1: "It is my ultimate goal to foster an environment where students are able to thrive academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally. . . . It is inevitable that things are not always going to go according to plan in both my professional and personal life; therefore, I think it is important for me to remain focused on the here-and-now so that I am able to fully dedicate myself to whatever is at hand."

Second, *self-compassion* and *absence of ego involvement/self-consciousness* are essential for helpers' abilities to stay present and compassionate toward others' suffering (Geller & Greenberg, 2012; Siegel & Germer, 2012). This includes the capacity for openness and receptiveness to whatever emerges from a session, including trusting the unfolding of the therapeutic process (Geller & Greenberg, 2012) and accepting "not knowing what's going on, not knowing what to do" (Kramer et al., 2008, p. 204). As a consequence, as they honed their clinical skills, the students became more confident in their abilities to naturally and spontaneously generate effective responses.

Student 4: "I can be very critical of the work I do, and often am looking to do the 'right thing.' However, working with people is not always about 'being right,' and I've learned to have to stop second guessing myself."

Student 3: “I need to trust some of my instincts or skill set more instead of second-guessing or doubting my ability to help someone in need.”

Student 7: “I’ve seen how trusting my intuition can lead to fruitful consequences. It felt easier than expected to go with what felt natural with my volunteer client, and we discovered some great insight because of it. Trusting myself and my abilities will be a great boon in my future career.”

Theme 4: Humility and appreciativeness. A final theme within *presence* is that of an increased sense of humility and appreciativeness as a result of increased self-awareness which set the stage for enhanced empathy and compassion. Students remarked that the experience of working with clients prompted greater awareness of areas in which they had been more fortunate in their experience than they had previously realized, making their everyday self-concerns seem less pressing:

Student 15: “Working with my client and listening to the stories of my classmates’ clients has humbled me and made me more appreciative of the people and experiences that I have been privileged to have had growing up.”

Summary. Hart’s virtue of *presence* was associated with the themes of here-and-now awareness which lent itself to increased attentiveness; attunement to self which set the stage for genuineness, prevention of problematic countertransference, and sensitivity to both their and their clients’ emotions and experiences; setting aside biases and developing comfort with more spontaneous responding; and setting aside self-concerns and increasing humility and appreciativeness. Returning to the extant models of intrapersonal helper development outlined earlier, these themes correspond with Ridley et al.’s (2011) *motivation* (overcoming personal obstacles) and *selectivity* (attuning to clients’ needs) as well as with numerous tenets associated with Fauth et al.’s (2007) *mindfulness* and Geller and Greenberg’s (2012) *preparation* for presence (e.g., regular meditation practice, clearing a space, bracketing, attitude of openness) and qualities of the *experience* of presence, especially immersion.

Heart

Theme 5: Sympathy versus empathy. This theme parallels Hart’s *empathizing*, *compassion*, and *feeling* subfactors—which, in order, relate to “feeling into” another person and understanding them, to the desire to reach out and help another, and to tuning into one’s own feelings without becoming overwhelmed by them in order to fully experience one’s humanness. For clients to benefit from the therapeutic encounter, “they need to experience . . . what healthy communication is all about” (Shafir, 2008, p. 216). The students came to recognize that Rogers’ (1957/2007) facilitative conditions of *empathy* and *unconditional positive regard* do not entail upholding a “client-centered superego” (Welwood, 2000, p. 167)—that is, “[feeling] abundant warmth for those whose actions make them highly unappealing” (Schwartz & Flowers, 2010, p. 41). Rather, the students embraced the attitude of acceptance of the other by virtue of creating a space in which clients could lay down their defenses and become more comfortable accepting and being themselves with helpers who maintained “sensitivity to the field that is created between and from the meeting of these two unique human beings” (Geller & Greenberg, 2012, p. 105). Such an empathetic relationship is conducive to clients’ satisfaction, feelings of safety, and abilities to think productively and process emotions, and it reciprocates into helpers responding and selecting interventions that are most compatible

with clients' frames of reference (Schwartz & Flowers, 2010).

This theme was perhaps the most salient example of the students' hermeneutic differentiation (as noted previously). Wegela (2009) emphasized that "if we are truly interested in helping another go beyond suffering, we must first be willing to be present with and acknowledge that suffering" (p. 80). As an outcome of increased presence and self-awareness, the students' empathy and compassion became enhanced, enabling them to better enter into their clients' lived experiences and to assume a greater level of reflexivity:

Student 13: "I . . . had not truly examined my own personality and behaviors before this course. I always thought that I was empathetic and open to new experiences[,] which is why I picked this field for my career; however[,] I did not truly experience introspection to this depth. . . . I have always felt empathetic towards others; however[,] through active listening I have been able to truly hear what people have to say without any judgment My empathy has grown into a stronger skill that goes beyond helping others into truly understanding who they are and what they have experienced."

Student 7: "It's likely that I simply have a more realistic view of the effort it takes to be compassionate and the large potential for growth that area contains. If I've learned anything from this class, it's that being an effective helper with appropriate compassion requires much more skill than just nodding and asking how someone feels."

Theme 6: It's a lonely profession; do not go at it alone. This theme parallels Hart's *connecting* subfactor—a sense of belonging to oneself, to a group, to humanity, and to the cosmos. In addition to becoming more comfortable in their skin as helpers (see Theme 3 above), the students also reported a greater sense of intimacy with their peers which helped them become more open to being emotionally vulnerable in the course and in supervision:

Student 4: "Even the small amount of time and support we feel each week has allowed me to feel more comfortable, more confident and more connected. It has proved to help me feel less stressed and as if there are other people who are not only experiencing the same things as I am, but discussing them openly too. It is without a doubt that this class this semester has played a major factor in raising my connection to others."

Arguably, this increased sense of synergy with one's peers as part of the training experience paved the way for even greater sense of transparency, authenticity, and congruence (Geller & Greenberg, 2012) with clients—that is, it enabled movement toward a more genuine, collaborative, *I-Thou* (Buber, as cited in Rogers, 1961/1995) encounter.

Summary. Hart's virtue of *heart* was associated with developing a more mature form of empathy and attunement to suffering in oneself and others, which reciprocated into more intimate relationships not only with clients but also with peers, supervisors, and so forth. These themes correspond with Ridley et al.'s (2011) aforementioned *selection* (attunement to clients' needs) and *purposefulness* (intentionality), as well as Geller and Greenberg's (2012) *process of presence* (receptivity, inward attending, extending, and contact).

Wisdom

Theme 7: Openness to feedback. This theme parallels Hart's *guidance* subfactor, which pertains to uncovering inner and outer sources of direction. First, by virtue of a

greater degree of openness to emotional vulnerability, the students became more comfortable acknowledging their strengths, identifying their limitations and areas for growth, and appropriately seeking and heeding feedback as necessary (as opposed to feigning competence and/or resisting constructive suggestions out of fear or embarrassment):

Student 3: “[My score on] *guidance* went up, which may indicate how comfortable I am seeking help from peers and professors or supervisors at my job.”

Second, some students recognized the impact they had on their clients and became more intentional in developing appropriate spontaneity and an ongoing attitude of *beginner’s mind* characterized by openness, interest, acceptance, and nonjudgment (Geller & Greenberg, 2012) that they could, in turn, model for their clients. Kottler (2003), for instance, stressed the importance of helpers not succumbing to hypocrisy in expecting clients to assume these qualities without practicing them themselves. In addition, the students became better able to “pull back and observe the process of experience, and not simply engage with its content” (Gehart & McCollum, 2008, p. 182):

Student 4: “If I keep a students’ attitude, and never feel as if ‘I have arrived’ at all I ever need to be or do, then I will continuously and humbly learn through experiences and other people. No professional ‘knows everything,’ but the minute they think they do they stop learning, growing, and connecting. This growth experience has reminded me to continue learning and adapting, this is only one part of my journey, and I will continually need to reevaluate and readjust. The best thing I can do is be open and be flexible.”

Such openness not only helps prevent therapeutic blunders, but it also makes beginning helpers more receptive to creative strategies suggested by their supervisors which are not readily found in conventional textbooks, treatment manuals/protocols, or training videos.

Theme 8: Faith in the unknown and in the process. This theme parallels Hart’s *possibility* and *clarifying* subfactors. The former refers to drawing from the idea that “something is possible” in order to transcend one’s current state/situation and create a future; the latter to operating in new ways, having freed oneself from blocks that are inherent in accumulated knowledge. As the students became more comfortable seeking appropriate guidance, they also became more comfortable taking appropriate risks and trying new and unfamiliar skills or creative intervention strategies that may be obvious for seasoned professional helpers but can be daunting for novices:

Student 15: “I learned throughout the semester that I have to . . . not allow anxiety to stand in my way of trying new things. I now feel more confident that sometimes trying things that scare me can help me to grow into a better therapist, as well as a more wise and confident person.”

Student 1: “I think that this counseling experience has helped to augment my faith in the therapeutic process. We learned at the beginning of the semester that counseling is not a linear process, but it is more like a dance. I think that this practical experience has helped to solidify my understanding of this concept. Therefore, I have a much higher inclination to believe in possibility.”

Accordingly, the students developed a better sense of the point behind specific intervention strategies (i.e., how they can promote developmental movement or particular changes in clients, etc.) and how they could extrapolate them to future cases. In turn, the

students developing their own comfort in the unknown set the stage for their clients to take appropriate risks. For example:

Student 11: “When my client first came in I don’t think she really wanted to make any changes or was aware that she distanced herself from others, but in our final session she said I helped her realize that she doesn’t want to distance herself from others and that she does want a relationship with her family and stepmother. This really showed me that sometimes it will take time for someone to realize they need to make a change. This will impact my work as a school psychologist because I will not be able to force a child to change his or her behaviors, but rather help them discover why they might want to.”

By developing a sense of faith in the unknown, the students also developed a greater sense of patience in the therapeutic process and learned not to give up on clients who may not initially seem invested in the process of change.

Theme 9: Therapy is not advice giving. This theme parallels Hart’s *discerning* subfactor, the capacity for wise choice and recognizing distinctions of quality. As the students became more tolerant of ambiguity, they were able to surrender the role of expert who unilaterally sets goals and applies interventions and assume more of the role of facilitator of change from within the client:

Student 3: “No matter how much I wanted to be able to say ‘Do it this way!’ I had to be able to sit back and let the client come to her own conclusions—which, I have to say, is very satisfying when it works properly.”

Student 17: “I have learned a lot this semester [about] . . . how to respond to various situations and when to stop myself from responding.”

Clients tend to “bring not only their difficulties, but also their own wisdom” to sessions (Shafir, 2008, p. 223). The more helpers can guide clients toward that wisdom and facilitate opportunities for clients to build upon it—thereby promoting clients’ courage to own and act on their sense of *intentionality* (May, 1969)—the more sustainable change the client is likely to experience. Referencing Adler’s concept of *social interest* (*gemeinschaftsgefühl*), Maslow (1967) likened effective helpers to:

the wise and loving older brother [or sister who] tries to improve the younger, [seeking] to make [the younger] better than [they are], in the younger’s own style. See how different this is from the “teaching somebody who doesn’t know nothin” model! [Helping] is not concerned with training or with molding or with teaching in the ordinary sense of telling people what to do and how to do it. It is not concerned with propaganda. It is a Taoistic uncovering and *then* helping. . . . [This] is not a laissez-faire philosophy or a philosophy of neglect or of refusal to help or care. . . . What good [helpers] do is to help [their clients] to unfold, to break through [their] defenses against [their] own self-knowledge, to recover [themselves], and to get to know [themselves]. . . . Respectful of the inner nature, the being, the essence of this “younger brother [or sister],” [the helper] would recognize that the best way for [clients] to lead a good life is to be more fully [themselves]. (p. 285)

In the meantime, helpers can appropriately provide constructive feedback and offer information as appropriate to clarify misgivings, to help clients see options or alternatives, or develop new perspectives and make decisions when they reach the extent of their knowledge base (Skovholt & Rivers, 2007). By balancing therapeutic presence with therapeutic authority, a sense of therapeutic voice is developed (Michael Alcee, personal communication, October 2016).

Summary. Hart's virtue of *wisdom* was associated with maintaining openness to feedback, faith in the unknown and in the therapeutic process, surrendering the expert role and assuming that of facilitator, and also providing appropriate information and/or feedback as the situation demands. These themes correspond with Ridley et al.'s (2011) aforementioned *purposefulness* (i.e., seeking supervision), *motivation* (i.e., overcoming anxiety), and *sequencing and timing*—as well as Geller and Greenberg's (2012) *preparation for presence* (i.e., beginner's mind).

Creation

Theme 10: Tolerance of ambiguity and flexibility. This theme parallels Hart's *imagining* and *will and willingness* subfactors—which build bridges between unknown and known and between the constructive surrender of willingness and the power of will. By virtue of the students' abilities to participate more authentically in the therapeutic encounter without relying solely on preordained scripts, they were better able to draw from their innate abilities to creatively formulate responses that met the demands of the situation:

Student 2: "It was scary at first when I realized that things could not be neatly planned out. I found it challenging that I couldn't plan out every session ahead of time and have it go all according to plan. I had to use and develop better creativity skills in order to respond appropriately to my client! According to the scores on the [SAM], I showed some growth in this area."

Student 10: "I could not plan for what would happen during the sessions. I came in with a plan but had to be open or willing for that plan to change if the client took the session elsewhere."

Tolerating uncertainty and trusting the therapeutic process helps avoid helper responses that are out of sync with clients' words (Geller & Greenberg, 2012; Kottler & Shepard, 2015) and therefore come at the expense of clients' trust (Schwartz & Flowers, 2010). While the students learned a host of intervention strategies and their appropriate uses/contexts throughout the course, in some cases it was necessary to set those aside when their clients presented new information that rendered them ineffective in that moment. This ability to go with the flow in meeting clients where they were not only sharpened the students' capacities for psychological flexibility and effective responding based on the immediacy of the moment of the session, but also served to enhance the therapeutic alliance as well as model such flexibility for the clients.

Theme 11: Integrated creativity. This theme parallels Hart's *originality* and *calling* subfactors, which pertain to authentic living and to identifying a sense of purpose, vocation, and voice, respectively. These relate to Arieti's (1976) *tertiary process* creativity and Maslow's (1999) concept of *integrated* creativity—which refer to harmonizing intuitive/primary process/Dionysian thinking with rational/secondary process/Apollonian thinking into a gestalt that is easily recognized and understood by others. Applied to helping, the more that helpers can carefully and explicitly articulate intuitions they have about clients and clients' experiences based on a sense of intersubjective resonance and reflexivity, the more clients may feel validated. By receptively taking in the experience of the client, attending inwardly to their lived experience, and synthesizing that with embodied knowledge of past learning (both academic and personal), helpers generate "an undirected, unmediated, and intuitive response in the form of words, images, or sensations [which] arises . . . from this internal, in-the-moment, experience" that sets the stage for relevant therapeutic dialogue (Geller & Greenberg, 2012, p. 108):

Student 15: "I think the reasoning for the low score [the first time I took the SAM] was not due to my lack of originality, rather a lack of self-confidence in my ability to be creative. This time my results revealed a . . . six point increase. . . . Mindfulness practice has pushed me to become more intuitive and to better trust my gut response to things. Also, throughout working with my client this semester I have learned to become more aware of how I am wording things, and more confident in asking questions, paraphrasing, and reflecting feelings back to my client."

This statement brings Hart's model full circle. By mindfully attending and attuning to their inner experience in conjunction with their intersubjective experiencing of their clients, the students were able to draw from an intuitive, artistic impulse to reflexively respond in ways that originated within themselves and were uniquely their own but also were easily understandable by their clients and by me (as their supervisor) because they touched upon our common humanity. From there, the students also were able to appropriately integrate those insights with their emerging knowledge of theory and technique in the interest of honing their practice in ways that were both in accordance with their individual contributions to their clients and to the profession as well as with the standards of evidence-based (i.e., scientific) practice.

Summary. Hart's virtue of *creation* was associated with flexible responding and developing and drawing from a creative voice as a helper. These themes correspond with Ridley et al.'s (2011) aforementioned *selection* (i.e., attunement to clients' needs) and *timing*, as well as Geller and Greenberg's (2012) *experience of presence* (grounding, immersion, expansion, and being with and for the client).

Discussion

Taken together, the students' journals suggested that their experience in the *Psychotherapy and Intervention Skills* course, as reflected in their posttest SAM results, followed a pattern that corresponds with the numerated themes identified previously: (1) The students developed stronger senses of here-and-now awareness and reflexivity which enabled them to clear a space for better attention to detail in clients' narratives and nonverbal behavior. This heightened sense of presence resulted in (2) increased attunement to their own and their clients' emotional processes which set the stage for genuineness, prevention of problematic countertransference, and sensitivity to both their and their clients' emotions and experiences, (3) setting aside biases as well as perfectionism and developing comfort with being more spontaneous, and (4) setting aside self-concerns and developing greater humility and appreciativeness as individuals in helper roles. These enabled the students to focus less on their own concerns and (5) to assume a more genuinely compassionate and mature form of empathy and attunement to suffering in oneself and others that paved the way for (6) more intimate relationships not only with clients but also with peers, supervisors, and so forth. This facilitated a greater sense of (7) comfort in acknowledging their strengths and areas for growth and, accordingly, openness to guidance and feedback and (8) confidence trying new and unfamiliar skills and faith in the ambiguity of the therapeutic process. They came to realize that effective helping involves (9) not advice giving but rather assuming the role of facilitator and therefore (10) flexibly empowering clients' sense of intentionality. Finally, the students found themselves (11) less reliant on prescriptive techniques and more invested in developing and drawing from a creative voice as a helper to benefit and empower their clients in ways that are consistent with humanistic-oriented evidence-based practice (see Angus, Watson, Elliott, Schneider, & Timulak, 2015; Cain, Keenan, & Rubin, 2016). Taken together, these themes associated with students' becoming

effective-persons-as-effective-helpers reflected a self-actualizing process propagated by humanistic psychologists (e.g., Allport, 1955; Maslow, 1999; Rogers, 1961/1995; see also Bland & DeRobertis, 2017; DeRobertis & McIntyre, 2016).

While the SAM itself did not directly promote the students' intrapersonal growth in the course per se, it did serve as a catalyst for students' thinking about their personal growth and its implications for their professional development in conjunction with other course activities and materials. The SAM provided a concrete means by which the students could, at the beginning of the semester, recognize and assume ownership of their strengths and areas for growth as beginning helpers-as-people. This made them particularly attuned to how their personal attributes related to their competencies in building and maintaining effective helping relationships. As the semester progressed and concluded, the SAM provided a backdrop by which the students could take note of their incremental progress in how they came to better understand the meanings of therapeutic principles (e.g., empathy).

I noticed two salient patterns in the students' SAM scores, which seem typical based on my observations of beginning helping professionals in my years as a supervisor to date. First, one group of students' scores on the *heart* virtue decreased from first to second administrations (i.e., pretest to posttest) while their scores on the *wisdom* virtue increased. This tended to occur most among students who had strong nurturing skills but whose academic skills and levels of insight about clients' struggles required guidance during supervision. Although coming to better differentiate between sympathy and empathy is common for most helping trainees, it seemed particularly relevant for this group who required a greater degree of cognitive empathy to balance their strong affective empathy. In addition, a second group of students' scores on the *wisdom* virtue decreased while their scores on the *presence* virtue increased. This tended to occur most among students who had strong analytical skills but whom I assisted in raising interpersonal comfort and attunement. Becoming more tolerant of ambiguity was particularly relevant for this group. Taking these groups together, Siegel and Germer (2012) commented on the importance of helpers' ability to balance wisdom and compassion:

In [helping professions], if we feel compassionately toward a client but have no wisdom, we are liable to lose our compassion, become overwhelmed with emotion, lose the path through suffering, and conclude that the treatment is hopeless. Conversely, if we can wisely comprehend the multidetermined nature of a [client's] problem but are out of touch with the [client's] despair, our supposedly wise therapeutic suggestions will fall on deaf ears. Our [clients] need both; they need to feel felt, and they need a realistic path through their suffering (p. 34).

Although the SAM is insufficient as a sole measure of students' development in a helping skills course insofar as (a) it does not cover skill competence and (b) it pertains to helper development more indirectly than directly, it has promise as a component of the developmental process of training helping professionals when employed in conjunction with conventional measures and models of technical skill development. Moreover, as discussed previously, Hart's *Four Virtues* model (upon which the SAM is based) both parallels extant models of interpersonal and intrapersonal helper development (e.g., Fauth et al., 2007; Geller & Greenberg, 2012; Ridley et al., 2011) and integrates them within a more coherent and cohesive structure. Furthermore, compared with existing measures discussed at the beginning of this article, the SAM more comprehensively covers all three of the skills associated with mindfulness (single-focus concentration, open-field mindful awareness, and loving-kindness and compassion) as well as the three domains of wisdom (cognitive, reflective, and emotional) as identified by Siegel and Germer (2012). In

addition, it provides a platform called for by Ridley et al. (2011) for measuring incremental development of personal—not just professional—helper dispositions in an individualized manner. The more these self-actualizing dispositions and attitudes are developed as part of the helper's personal identity, the more they can become modeled for clients (Bland, 2013)—particularly the qualities of centeredness, equanimity, commitment to personal and spiritual growth, and the courage to be wrong and to flexibly change course as necessary (Geller & Greenberg, 2012; Koser, 2010; La Torre, 2002; Phelon, 2004; Tannen & Daniels, 2010; Wegela, 2009). As noted by Maslow (1999; see also Bland & DeRobertis, in press), self-actualization entails a commitment to making changes for the development of an ideal society.

Future Research

The helping professions are “in need of not only new training models but also more training research” (Fauth et al., 2007, p. 388). While this study on the SAM served to promote familiarity with Hart's (2014) *Four Virtues* model and the SAM and their utility in helper training, it is only a point of departure. In future studies, I plan to conduct a more thorough comparison/contrast analysis of the students' *pre* and *post* journals (whereas the current study focused only on the *post* journals). In addition, I have invited the students who participated in this study to take part in a follow-up study in which they are completing a third SAM assessment and sitting for an interview on their longitudinal progress following the *Psychotherapy and Intervention Skills* course. Furthermore, additional research could explore connections between SAM score patterns and Rønnestad and Skovholt's (2003) stages of helper development to ascertain more nuanced aspects of bringing Hart's virtues into balance as part of being a mature professional helper. Moreover, to increase the legitimacy of Hart's (2014) *Four Virtues* model for a more conventional audience as well as its practicality for instructors/supervisors, new helper development scales can be constructed which comprehensively incorporate both the breadth of interpersonal helping skills and the depth of the dispositional constructs promoted by Hart's virtues and subfactors. Finally, because Hart's model and measure were the focus of this study, they were employed in conjunction with extant helper development literature as a conceptual lens through which I approached the students' journals when conducting my thematic analysis (thus sidestepping the possibility of bracketing past knowledge/experience). On the other hand, a future study could employ the descriptive phenomenological method (see Giorgi, 2009)—whereby epoché (i.e., the act of suspending biases and assumptions) is included as part of a phenomenological reduction (i.e., intuitively discovering the invariant essences of phenomena as experienced intersubjectively on their own terms)—to arrive at a structure that builds upon the current findings in order to contribute more generally to the helper-as-person literature.

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Author Note

Andrew M. Bland is a member of the graduate clinical psychology faculty at Millersville University in Lancaster County, PA. He received a master's degree from the University of West Georgia's humanistic-existential-transpersonal psychology program in 2003 and a PhD in counseling psychology from Indiana State University in 2013. He is a licensed psychologist; since 2004, he has provided therapeutic services in a variety of settings in four states, currently at Samaritan Counseling Center in Lancaster, PA. He serves as coeditor of the newsletter for the Society for Humanistic Psychology. His research interests include the practical application of themes from contemporary existential-humanistic psychology in the domains of love, work, social justice, the processes of therapy and education, creativity, spirituality, and human development. His passions include listening to and creating music, gardening, traveling, and spending time with his wife and their two young children.

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