A clinical perspective on the impact of program attendees on guiding figures in a transformational executive education program

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This work is dedicated to all the guiding figures in my past, present, and future.
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Abstract

Research on transformational executive education programs has tended to focus primarily on their evolution, design, and attendee experience. Few empirical studies, however, have explored the rich experience of transformational programs’ Guiding Figures (GFs), who play a multifaceted role that spans beyond the time-honored demands of faculty in business education. This study aimed to address this shortfall by exploring the impact attendees have on GFs in the context of an eight-module, clinically oriented transformational executive education program at a leading business school.

Findings from an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) uncovered six key themes. GFs felt a high level of intrapersonal and interpersonal intimacy; broadened and deepened their thinking; progressed towards mitigating their own neurotic traits; engaged in identity work; believed that they contributed to a broader purpose; experienced emotional labor relating to the challenges associated with helping attendees.

By strategically leveraging the experience of GFs in transformational programs, business schools can be well positioned to respond to executives, many of whom are increasingly entering executive education programs for personal exploration rather than career goals. With help from GFs, business schools can offer these executives deep insights about humanity and personal growth, and thereby transform into identity workspaces within a business context, which is a narrative that other providers of business education may find difficult to replicate.

Keywords: business schools, clinical paradigm, executive education, faculty development, identity work, transformational programs
Introduction

“The meeting of two personalities is like the contact of two chemical substances: if there is any reaction, both are transformed.” - Carl Jung

In recent years, significant changes in the business education landscape have confronted business schools, requiring them to rethink their role in business and in society. Business schools’ primary task is no longer limited to production and circulation of managerial knowledge (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010; Starkey & Tempest, 2005). To remain competitive, business schools are realizing that they need to rewrite their narrative, both as executive education providers (Harrison, Leitch, & Chia, 2007) and more broadly as business schools (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010; Starkey & Tempest, 2005). As such, they should offer learning that “involves becoming a different person” by “expanding horizons of understanding regarding the human condition” (Harrison et al., 2007, p. 336). It might therefore be argued that business schools increasingly need to function as “identity workspaces” (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010).

To deliver on the new narrative, some business schools have developed transformational executive education programs. These programs differ from typical business courses in that they go beyond cognitive content and require deep emotional engagement (Harrison et al., 2007; Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010; Petriglieri, Wood, & Petriglieri, 2011; Starkey & Tempest, 2005). Many involve engaging in identity work. Attendees periodically reflect on who they are, who they were, and who they might become (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2015); they “question, craft, revise, or affirm” (p. 630) their identity within the transitional space of an “identity laboratory” (ID lab) (Korotov, 2005). As will be discussed in the literature review, these ID labs feature several key elements that are rooted in a clinical paradigm (Zaleznik & Kets de Vries, 1985). Combined, these elements enable attendees to uncover and comprehend the hidden intrapsychic and interpersonal dynamics associated with perceptions, motivations, and
behaviors across individuals, teams, and organizations, and within themselves (Kets de Vries, 2006; Kets de Vries, Korotov, Florent-Treacy, & Rook, 2016).

Arguably the most critical component of an ID lab is the faculty, whose role and background often extends beyond convention in that they facilitate attendees’ identity exploration and experimentation. By doing so, they act as Guiding Figures (GFs)\(^1\) rather than professors or academics, and they become inextricably linked to the “dream” identity that attendees aspire to; one that sheds a perennial light on the answer to attendees’ fundamental questions such as, “Who exactly am I?”, “What matters most to me?”, and “What do I want to be remembered for?” (Khurana & Snook, 2011; Petriglieri, 2011; Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2015). GFs thus embody a sense of hope and future possibilities for many (Levinson, 1978).

GFs adapt to attendees’ specific needs to help them manage the difficult emotions associated with a personal or professional transition. This adaption entails playing a range of roles at different stages of the program, including a confidant, mentor, or transferential\(^2\) caregiver (Ibarra, 2004; Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2010). Gradually, GFs enable attendees to build their capacity to manage difficulties and take a step forward in creating positive change in their own lives. As such, GFs apply an atypical skillset and invest significant emotional energy in enabling program attendees’ development. In essence, GFs go beyond the time-honored role of faculty in business education and are like the Sherpa\(^3\) to a group of mountain climbers.

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\(^1\) Daniel Levinson (1978) was amongst the first persons to introduce the idea of guiding figures. He did so within the context of his research on navigating mid-life crises in his book *Seasons of a Man’s Life*. Herminia Ibarra (2004) subsequently used the term in her book *Working Identity* while explaining career transitions.

\(^2\) ‘Transference’ can be defined as the unconscious transfer of past experiences, especially with early caregivers, into a current interpersonal context (Fiscalini, 2015).

\(^3\) ‘Sherpa’ is typically a mountain guide in the Everest area. Sometimes thought of as mere porters, Sherpas are in fact typically highly skilled and experienced climbers. They are recognized for exceptional energy, strength, and ideas to help prepare mountaineers to succeed in their goal.
If the Sherpa guides many mountain climbers, it can be insightful to discover and understand how different mountain climbers impact the Sherpa. Such an understanding may help future Sherpas and mountain climbers in their journeys together. Further, to inform how evolving business schools can leverage the experience of GFs as Sherpas rather than as traditional professors or academics, it can be equally insightful to understand who or what acts as a Sherpa to the Sherpa; a guide for the GF. Yet research to date on transformational executive education programs has focused primarily on their evolution, design, and attendee experience (Florent-Treacy, 2009; Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2007; Kets de Vries, Florent-Treacy, Ramo, & Korotov, 2008; Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2010). Therefore, this study aimed to explore the following research question: What impact do program attendees have on GFs in a transformational executive education program?

This question was explored in the context of an eight-module, 18-month long clinically oriented transformational executive education program; the Executive Master in Coaching and Consulting for Change (EMCCC) at INSEAD, a leading global business school. It is in undertaking this program myself that I have produced this thesis, affording me a prime vantage point from which to investigate the topic.

As will be described in the methodology chapter of this thesis, Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), semi-structured interviews, and socio analytic methods (Long, 2013) were utilized to explore GFs’ experiences of being impacted by attendees. Almost unanimously, GFs felt that attendees had a meaningful impact on them in their role, as persons, and on the broader system and context of which the GFs are a part. Six key themes were uncovered in the analysis, and they are discussed in detail in the findings and discussion chapter.

of climbing mountains. Many mountaineers, including Sir Edmund Hillary, who was a famed mountaineer and explorer, consider Sherpas as invaluable contributors and perhaps even the backbone of their expeditions (Guide: What does a Sherpa at Mount Everest do?, 2014).
The subsequent chapter provides an account of the study’s limitations and offers suggestions for future research. Finally, a summary of conclusions is presented. First, however, attention will be turned to my reasons for choosing this particular topic. The chapter which follows will then provide a comprehensive review of relevant literature that informed and was informed by my interpretations of GFs’ experiences.

**My Interest in the Topic**

When I first started considering topics for my thesis, I thought about CEOs and top leadership teams, hoping the thesis would help further my career. However, to my surprise, I landed on a very different and deeply personal topic that fueled my soul.

Through my own “internal supervisor” (Casement, 2014), I arrived at a number of reasons for choosing this topic. The first relates to the most significant GFs in my life: my parents. Over the last three years, my father has experienced massive detrimental change in his professional and personal life. This change has significantly impacted his personal identity (Stryker, 1968), “working identity” (Ibarra, 2004), and our family. Yet he doesn’t talk about it much. I believe this thesis serves as my attempt to understand his experiences and rationale for his decisions. Ironically, through his relative silence, he has guided me the most in altering my perspective on work and life, and in experiencing my own latent wholeness.

Second, during EMCCC, I had a fantasy of being a GF. One EMCCC program co-director’s sheer patience and unconditional regard, and the other program co-director’s remarkable use of metaphors as a means to self-expression, have etched an impression on my psyche. I wanted to know more about their role, and by extension about them as people.

Third, in hindsight, I may have unconsciously believed this thesis topic as well suited to exploring a possible self (Markus & Nurius, 1986). By capturing my
interpretation of GFs’ experience, I might have been hoping to “test drive” my ability to combine real-life insights and stories, synthesize logic and emotion, be a deeper participant-observer of life, and be introspective yet outspoken in my embryonic desire to write. I am currently exploring being a writer; a self I never consciously thought about becoming. This “unthought known” (Bollas, 1987) self of mine increasingly feels drawn to what Reik (1948) describes as a “passionate curiosity about what goes on in the netherworld of the human soul” (p. 494). This thesis has turned out to be a beautiful, personal experience in that it offered me a means to express this curiosity in the space between a blank piece of paper and me.
Literature Review

In this chapter, I will summarize research related to transformational executive education programs, the role of GFs in these programs, and their interactions with attendees. Since this area is significantly under researched, as a proxy, I will explore the literature on the psychodynamics of the analyst-patient dyad. Such an exploration is likely relevant in understanding the GF-attendee relationship, which has many of the same underlying themes and dynamics as the analyst-patient dyad; namely, confidentiality, transference, countertransference, containment, holding, working alliances, discussions, self-examination, awareness, experimentation, and insights (Kilburg, 2000). Finally, I will propose a conceptual framework to systematically understand this impact.

Evolution of Transformational Executive Education Programs

Due to the ever-widening psychological gap and transitional relationships between organizations and their employees (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010), executives are increasingly entering executive education programs not only to access cognitive content (Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2007) but also to address their personal lives (Long, 2004) and to lay the foundation for an emerging identity and their true self (Dubouloy, 2004; Ibarra, 2004; Kets de Vries, Guillen-Ramo, Korotov, & Florent-Treacy, 2010; Kets de Vries et al., 2016; Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2007; Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2010; Korotov, 2005; Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010). In response, executive education providers such as some business schools have rejected a purely rational and behaviorist view of individuals and organizations (Kets de Vries, 2006). They have integrated psychodynamic theories in executive education, assisting executives in uncovering and comprehending the irrationality and hidden dynamics associated with perceptions, motivations, behaviors, and relationships across individuals, teams, and organizations, and within the executives themselves (Kets de Vries, 2006; Kets de Vries et al., 2016). This additional dimension, broadly called the
clinical paradigm, is important for overcoming the limitations of purely cognitive content and can ultimately enable self-discovery and personal transformation (Kets de Vries, 2006; Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2007; Petriglieri et al., 2011).

Zaleznik and Kets de Vries (1985) were amongst the pioneers who defined and applied the clinical paradigm to leadership and organizations. Kets de Vries (2006) explains that the clinical paradigm, which integrates perspectives from multiple disciplines, including psychoanalytic theory, short-term dynamic psychotherapy, family systems theory, group dynamics, and anthropology (Van de Loo, 2000), has four philosophical underpinnings. First, there is a rationale behind even those human acts that appear irrational. Because the reasons for actions are often complex and elusive, practitioners must engage in “detective work” in order to identify and make sense of them. This requires emotional intelligence. The second assumption is that a great deal of our thoughts, feelings, and motives are often outside of our conscious awareness. Third, the way in which we express and regulate our emotions is fundamental to who we are. Finally, the paradigm is guided by the notion that we are all products of our past in that our development is an interpersonal process as much as it is an intrapersonal one. Childhood experiences are crucial in determining how we relate to others.

Kets de Vries (2005a) contends that transformational programs need to incorporate a clinical paradigm to be truly transformational. Further, drawing from the theory of group psychotherapy, he proposes that a group coaching format is important to the success of these programs because it encourages a shared sense of hope towards a better future, establishes a foundation of trust through interpersonal learning and group cohesion, encourages versatility in that attendees both give and receive help, and promotes mutual accountability to change (Kets de Vries, 2005a; Yalom & Leszcz, 2005).
The “Identity Laboratory” and Role of the Guiding Figures

With a foundation of Kets de Vries’ application of the clinical paradigm and Ibarra’s (2004, 2007) study of fundamental identity transition and voluntary career change, Korotov (2005, 2006) has developed a theory of clinically-oriented executive education programs, which he describes as transitional spaces that may function as “identity laboratories” (ID labs). He hypothesized that an ID lab is designed such that it can help individuals deeply explore who they are, were, and might become. Further, an ID lab has several key elements: perceived psychological safety; temporal, spatial, and psychological separation boundaries from the rest of the world; the presence of transitional objects; clinically trained faculty who act as GFs.

To guide attendees closer to their “dream identities”, GFs are required to help them address the uncertainty and anxiety that is invariably associated with change. They may help manage attendees’ troublesome feelings such as helplessness, self-doubt, confusion, guilt, or panic; defensive behaviors such as denial and projective identification⁴; and deep-rooted conflicts related to past caregivers (Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2007). GFs do so by offering empathy, genuineness, and unconditional positive regard⁵ (Rogers, 1957), which enable them to adapt to attendees’ needs. Attendees can feel “held” and protected as a consequence, much the same way that an infant may feel held and protected by a mother who completely adapts to her infant’s primitive physical and psychological requirements. Through this adaptation, GFs are said to have provided attendees with “holding” (Finlay, 2015; Petriglieri et al., 2011; Winnicott, 2005), and they might be perceived by attendees as authority figures, confidants, coaches, mentors, teachers, truth-tellers, villains (Ibarra, 2004; Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2010), or even transferential caregivers (Kets de Vries & Korotov,

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⁴ ‘Projective identification’ can be described as a process in which aspects of the self are unconsciously split off and attributed to an external object (Ogden, 1977).

⁵ Unconditional positive regard can be defined as fundamental acceptance, support, and respect for another person irrespective of what the person says or does.
Over time, GFs process attendees’ projections, i.e. their unwanted or overwhelming thoughts and feelings, modify them in a constructive way, and return the projections back such that attendees recognize that they can survive seemingly overwhelming emotions and needs. GFs are said to have provided attendees with “containment” much the same way that a mother may help her infant develop foundational mechanisms for internal regulation (Bion, 1962; Finlay, 2015; Petriglieri, 2011; Petriglieri et al., 2011). Gradually, GFs withdraw holding and containment, and attendees build their capacity to self-regulate, manage difficulties, and take a step forward in creating a change in their lives. With ongoing challenge and support from GFs, by the end of the program, a majority of attendees should ideally report having reached personalized developmental milestones related to self-awareness, self-management, and personal narratives (Petriglieri et al., 2011).

Evidently, GFs apply an atypical set of skills and spend an inordinate amount of emotional energy in their role. Kets de Vries and Korotov (2010) note that, in addition to a deep understanding of management, GFs need to have “knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are not typically found in a traditional business school academic . . . [GFs] need to be well-versed in the principles of human functioning, group dynamics, short-term dynamic psychotherapy, and techniques such as motivational interviewing” (p. 18). They constantly deal with an “indeterminate zone” of practice (Schon, 1983) and adaptive challenges where there are no clear frameworks, answers, precedents, or even truths (Heifetz, Grashow, & Linsky, 2009).

Korotov (2006) has written about the need to further investigate the role of the GFs. Levinson (2007) has encouraged GFs to seek help from their supervisors to understand their own irrational behaviors and neurotic traits. Kets de Vries and Korotov (2010) have suggested that GFs in transformational executive education programs should undertake “a process of personal self-exploration, experimentation and change before they try to help others” (p. 18). In particular,
they note that in the process of helping others transform, GFs may realize the need to self-transform. So overall, in spite of the critical role of the GFs, there is a dearth of research on their experience in transformational programs. I contend that addressing this shortfall can uncover new perspectives related to understanding and shaping the role of GFs and transformational programs at business schools, and ultimately leveraging GFs’ skills and experiences to help business schools evolve their narrative.

**Observations through a Clinical Lens to Analyst-Patient Relationships**

As mentioned in the introduction, because research to date has not tended to consider the GF-attendee dynamic, it seemed useful to review insights into an analogous relationship for which much research exists; that of the analyst and patient. Hence, current understanding of this relationship will now be traced back to its theoretical beginnings.

Paradigms in psychoanalysis have evolved over time. Freud defined the paradigm of the impersonal analyst as a “blank screen” (Lionells, Fiscalini, Mann, & Stern, 2015b) and “objective mirror” (Fiscalini, 2006). He considered patients to be infantile and analysts to be the grown up and interpretive authority (Fisher, 1982). Impact and influence were thought of as being strictly one-way. In contrast to Freud, Ferenczi experimented with the idea of “mutual analysis” (Ferenczi, Dupont, Balint, & Jackson, 1988). His innovative idea was for analysts to share with patients their own shortcomings and feelings as openly as possible, and for both parties to find themselves in relation to the other. While his patients showed enhanced progress, his approach of mutuality as a rigid rule turned out to be problematic. He questioned himself and ultimately aborted his approach (Lionells et al., 2015b). Nevertheless, he stood firm in positing the idea of mutual help between analyst and patient and that the best analyst is the cured patient.

Some of Ferenczi’s work paved the way for the interpersonal/relational paradigm, which views the analyst as an “intersubjective participant observer” (Fiscalini,
2006), and of which Harry Stack Sullivan was a pioneer (Lionells, Fiscalini, Mann, & Stern, 2015a). Clara Thompson, Eric Fromm, Frieda-From-Reichmann, and Karen Horney also played an important role in the emergence of this paradigm (Lionells, Fiscalini, Mann, & Stern, 2015a). It is considered a pragmatic, pluralistic, and egalitarian paradigm between analyst and patient. It focuses on the overlap of their experience “that operates consciously and unconsciously, in the present and the past, in reality and fantasy, in the inner world and the outer one” (Lionells et al., 2015a). Sullivan believed that the analyst may sometimes become the patient (Yalom, 2002). Building on Sullivan, Searles (1975) evocatively argued that the urge to heal is a primitive therapeutic striving in everyone, and so every patient wishes to unconsciously heal his or her analyst. This wish may manifest itself as genuine feelings of intimacy and growth for the analyst.

Building on the aforementioned paradigms, a new paradigm called coparticipant inquiry has recently emerged (Fiscalini, 2006). Co-participant inquiry emphasizes the dialectic of both personal singularity and interpersonal sameness. In this paradigm, analysts' expertise lies not in their knowledge but in their ability to facilitate reflection, dialogue, imagination, and ultimately infuse a sense of vitality in a patient's life. This also holds conversely, in that the shared experience may result in patients helping analysts transform themselves. Fiscalini notes that patients may help analysts foster the development of new perspectives on life, a greater capacity for intimacy and empathy, and an ability to play. Further, analysts may mitigate some of their neurotic traits such as judgmentalness, burdensome perfectionism, and other defensive patterns.

Rooted in these bi-directional paradigms is an extensive literature on the specific, positive impact that patients have on analysts. For example, Searles wrote widely about his own deeply personal insights (Sapountzis, 2009) and previously unrecognized feelings (Searles, 1966) that he experienced with patients' unconscious therapeutic help. Further, Casement (2014) explained that his work with his patients may reflect his own professional or personal needs. He also
noted how patients may unconsciously supervise analysts through, say, *mirroring*. Farber’s (1983) survey concluded that analysts become increasingly “psychologically-minded”, “self-aware”, and “self-assured” because of their practice. Basescu (1987), in reference to his own sexuality and mortality, reflected on how he became aware of a change in his perspective while listening to himself listen to patients. In her seminal work *The Intimate Edge*, Ehrenberg (1974, as cited in Laidlaw & Heusser, 2014) passionately wrote about both parties’ unique vulnerability and intimacy often being at the genesis of a positive therapeutic encounter. Laidlaw and Heusser noted that, “Celebrating a spaghetti-like embroilment of mutual vulnerability, Ehrenberg challenges us as therapists to . . . emotionally risk ourselves in relation to our patients” (p. 7).

Going a step further, numerous authors have broadly validated analysts’ personal growth, therapeutic rapture, and sense of honor at working with patients (Burton, 1975; Dryden & Spurling, 2014; Guy & Liaboe, 1986; Kottler, 1987; Råbu, Moltu, Binder, & McLeod, 2015; Yalom, 2002). In particular, Yalom (2002) described the occupational privileges of following in the footsteps of Jung, Kierkegaard, Plato, and even the Buddha. He discussed being a “cradler of secrets” (p. 257), a “midwife to the birth of something new and liberating” (p. 258), and “ministering to human despair” (p. 259). Further, Råbu et al. (2015) reported that analysts feel a sense of awe, gratitude, play through improvisation, and wholeness at having a life that is meaningful, challenging, and full of growth. It can be argued that many analysts thus view their work as a calling rather than simply as a profession.

However, in stark contrast, several studies, including some of the aforementioned ones, have also converged on the negative impact that patients have on their analysts. Freud (1937) compared analysts’ exposure to patients as being overexposed to X-rays; he encouraged all analysts to undergo periodic

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* Mirroring can be thought of as the act by which one person imitates another person in their presence (Kets de Vries et al. 2016).
analysis of their own. While working with idealizing patients, some analysts may feel a false sense of authority and grandiosity (Bermak, 1977; Kottler, 1987), and even godhood (Marmor, 1982). Completing this perspective, Yalom (2002) has explained analysts’ self-doubt, isolation, and sense of inner drainage as occupational hazards. Yalom and Leszcz (2005) reported that analysts “may feel angry, exploited, sucked dry, steamrolled, intimidated, bored, and tearful” (p. 44). Further, Råbu et al. (2015) reported the dark side of analysts’ work that involves accumulating others’ suffering, a burden on familial relationships, and burnout. They emphasized the importance of self-care strategies, such as “keeping their own inner space” (p. 9 as above) and knowing the limits to over-commitment. Mahoney and Eiseman (2014) contended that the sheer intensity of being an analyst can leave “stretch marks on their consciousness” (p. 27) and etch a psychic scar (Bermak, 1977; Dryden & Spurling, 2014; Guy & Liaboe, 1986).

Overall, it can be argued that working with patients has both a positive and a detrimental impact on analysts’ identities – be it in their roles or their personal lives. The more analysts know and understand about their being influenced by their patients, the more effectively they can facilitate personal growth both within their patients and themselves. As stated, I propose that GFs and attendees in transformational executive education have a similar dynamic. Thus, I argue that it is fundamental for GFs to reflect upon this reciprocity for the same reasons it is important for analysts to.

**Conceptual Framework for Understanding Guiding Figures’ Experience**

In developing a conceptual framework, my aim was to consider all possible influences on the GFs. In order to achieve this, I considered role as a systemic concept, in that role can be differentiated from context, system and person, yet understood as interlinked with them. Therefore, applying Long’s (2016) Transforming Experience Framework (TEF) allowed the GFs’ experiences to be
viewed through the intersection of four domains as illustrated in Figure 1 below.

**Figure 1.** Long’s (2016) Transforming Experience Framework (TEF) (adapted from p. 6)
1. **The experience of being a person:** This can be thought of as each GF’s personal, ongoing journey of how they view themselves and the world and what is important to them. GFs as people are influenced by changing “desire and yearning” (p. 6). According to Long (2016), “Yearning . . . is established through the process of sublimation when desire becomes linked to a purpose beyond the ego . . . it impels the person to find meaning and identity within a purpose beyond the self” (pp. 6-7).

2. **The experience of being in a system:** I view this as the EMCCC program with certain conditions of an ID lab. This system has a life of its own with a variety of conscious and unconscious processes between GFs and attendees.

3. **The experience of being in a context:** Context is the environment within which a system resides. The research setting for this study, namely INSEAD, is an example of context. Awareness and alignment with context allows a system to operate successfully by effectively utilizing resources available within that context.

4. **Role:** Role lies at the intersection of the other domains. Action takes place in the system through a role. Newton (2013) defines “role” as “the pattern of attitude, meaning, feeling, and behavior that characterizes an individual’s way of living and working” in a system (pp. 205-206). Further, he notes that one’s role will be determined by the interplay of forces between the expectations one has of oneself in role and the expectations of the context or system, as defined by a constellation of powerful stakeholders. This dynamic has been termed by Krantz and Malitz (1997) as the “role as taken versus the role as given” (p. 2). The accountability of role to system, role to context and role to self should ideally not be in conflict with each other. In this study, the GF role is the one under consideration.

5. **The experience of connectedness with “source”:** Source can be thought as the wider social context, in this case the broader landscape of the business school industry and the evolving role of business schools in business and society as executives increasingly look to explore their personal lives at business schools (Long, 2004).
Methodology

An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) methodological framework was adopted for this study. Phenomenology is concerned with understanding the meaning of lived experiences and personal perceptions within participants’ worlds (Creswell, 2007; Smith & Osborne, 2008), with a particular emphasis on how the phenomenon under study may be different or unique from other phenomena (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). In this case, the phenomenon was the impact of attendees on GFs in a transformational program. Other phenomena might include the impact students have on faculty in conventional programs.

IPA is an appropriate methodology for this study for a number of reasons. According to Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012), IPA can be described as a “double hermeneutic or dual interpretation process because, firstly, the participants make meaning of their world and, secondly, the researcher tries to decode that meaning - to make sense of the participants' meaning making” (p. 362). In this study, as mentioned in my reasons for choosing this topic, I am deeply interested in understanding the descriptive meaning from the GFs’ perspectives while still developing my own clinical interpretations of their experiences. Second, the IPA methodology allowed me to conduct an in-depth and shared examination of personal, lived accounts of several individuals across a relatively homogenous sample (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012), in this case nine GFs in EMCCC. Finally, IPA is widely considered suitable in clinical psychology and psychotherapy and for studying the experience of being in a transition (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012), all of which are closely related to my research question.

Research Setting

Research took place within the context of a clinically oriented executive education program at a leading, global business school; namely, the Executive Master in Consulting and Coaching for Change (EMCCC) at INSEAD. The
program is offered at both the Singapore and Fontainebleau campuses. I chose this program as the research setting for four reasons. First, it is one of the very few clinically oriented executive education programs in the world. Second, it is led by a highly diverse group of GFs who are both scholars and practitioners, many of whom have rigorous training and deep experience in both psychoanalysis and management. Third, it is an academically rigorous degree program within the context of a global, leading provider of executive education. And finally, I am also a participant in this program and have direct access to its GFs. While my analysis may have been impacted by my participation in this program, I have made every attempt to limit my biases and avoid conclusions that are solely based on my own experience.

Program structure. EMCCC is an 18-month long modular program that comprises eight on-campus modules, with each module lasting three to four days. The eight modules are supplemented with 50 academic hours of practical activities and a capstone master thesis. Attendees come from highly diverse backgrounds and industries. A majority of them are experienced executives; primarily general managers, HR professionals, consultants, and coaches. Each class, or “wave”, has around 40 attendees.

The content of each module is summarized in Appendix C. They are experienced in small and large peer groups with rotating membership. Between modules, attendees apply concepts and insights from the classroom to past or current aspects of their lives and write reflection and case papers to deepen their understanding of self and others. They bring additional insights to the next module and further develop their “detective capabilities”.

Resident and visiting GFs. Two co-program directors, who act as resident GFs, facilitate the entire EMCCC journey. They receive periodic guidance from a scientific director. All three directors are not only management scholar-

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7 For the purposes of this study, fellow attendees, family members, and work colleagues who may play a role in attendee’s identity exploration and experimentation were not considered GFs.
practitioners but also highly experienced psychotherapists who apply a clinical paradigm. In close partnership with attendees, these GFs create the safe, transitional space of EMCCC as an ID lab (Korotov 2005, 2006). Consistent with principles of transformational program design discussed in the literature review, they create and maintain the group through holding and containment, build a group culture that promotes co-operation, intimacy, trust, and interpersonal learning, and enable the group to help facilitate change for each attendee. The right climate is critical since the overall experience of the attendees is determined as much by their level of cohesion as an autonomous group as it is by the GFs’ role as a Sherpa to the group.

In addition to the resident GFs, each module involves one or more visiting GFs. Whereas resident GFs’ expertise lies in the clinical paradigm, visiting GFs’ expertise lies in specific domains, such as decision-making, family business and entrepreneurship, organizational behavior, and strategy. For the purpose of this study, interviews with resident GFs were treated in a manner identical to interviews with visiting GFs since the EMCCC program has a long history of proving that non-clinically trained professionals can develop deep clinical insights.

Sample

I started with a list of each of the GFs involved in the program, whether resident or visiting. They were considered as long as they had played the role of a GF in at least one wave, irrespective of whether it was at the Fontainebleau or the Singapore campus. In total, 13 GFs were shortlisted and contacted by email with an interview request. While 10 agreed to be interviewed, three cited pressing commitments as a barrier to their availability. One GF dropped out one day before the interview due to unforeseen circumstances. Key details about each of

8 Visiting GFs areas of expertise are closely tied to human dynamics that lie at the heart of leadership and organizations, and they possess a deep appreciation, open-mindedness, and curiosity for the clinical approach.
the interviewed GFs can be found in Appendix A.

In total, nine interviews were conducted, each lasting between 30 and 90 minutes. Due to prior commitments, one interviewee could only commit to a 10-minute slot. However, it was reasoned that it was still worth conducting the interview in order to glean insights from that individual, and indeed the interview provided meaningful data.

Four of the interviews were conducted in person at the Fontainebleau campus during Module Eight, one in Canada, two over Skype, and two over the phone. Before the interview, informed consent was sought from interviewees via the administration of a briefing note and consent form. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw all or part of their data from the study.

Data Collection

In-depth, individual semi-structured interviews were used with the aim of collecting detailed accounts of GFs’ lived experience. Interview questions were created with an adaptation of Long’s (2016) Transformational Experience Framework (TEF) as a guide (see Figure 1). As such, GFs’ experiences were viewed from the intersection of four domains: self, role, system, and context. Ahead of the interviews, a shortlist of questions was piloted and refined with three other EMCCC attendees. An updated interview schedule was then prepared (see Appendix B for example questions).

Each interview started with a brief introduction that explained its purpose. The interview was then framed as a mutual exploration to spark genuine dialogue, allowing for flexibility to discover novel perspectives (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). I was thus often a “participant-observer” in the interview. With permission from each interviewee, interviews were audio recorded to have a precise record, freeing up my attention to focus on active listening, non-verbal communication,
and my own thoughts and feelings.

During the interviews, I utilized socio-analytic methods to expand the scope to include unconscious dynamics (Long, 2013) through discussions about mental phenomena such as associations and fantasies (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). I also used myself as an instrument, often reflecting on my own anxiety, boredom, curiosity, irritation, surprise, and wonder in response to the interviewee, both during and after the interview (Van de Loo, 2016). This approach allowed both semantic and latent themes to emerge in my analysis.

All digital recordings were transcribed verbatim, noting meaningful pauses, gestures, and change in tone, slips, and other unexpected non-verbal reactions. Follow up interviews via Skype were conducted in two cases to clarify some responses. These were not transcribed.

**Data Analysis**

The IPA methodology was applied to understand, code, and derive meaning from the data. I applied the following procedure based primarily on Howitt’s (2010) and Pietkiewicz & Smith’s (2012) approach:

1. I consciously thought about bracketing my own experience of being an EMCCC participant.

2. I immersed myself in the data, reading each transcript at least twice. I annotated each transcript, making notes related to the content (what was being said), choice of words, metaphors, images, pauses, and repetitions as sources of rich interpretations (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). I also summarized each transcript in a short paragraph.
3. Subsequently, for the first transcript, I worked with my notes and looked closely for the *emic* perspective (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012) and abstract semantic themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). I then reflected on the non-verbal and unspoken aspects of the interview, in addition to my personal experiences. Sample questions that I reflected on included: what was surprising or disappointing; what was conspicuous by its absence; what came first or last; why did the interviewee give a very concise or detailed explanation; what was the body language like; what were my own thoughts and feelings and why? I then made notes on the *etic* perspective (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012) and latent themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Combining the emic and etic perspectives, I identified a number of emerging themes. Finally, I challenged myself to identify evidence that might stand in the way of my themes.

4. I then looked for connections across emerging themes, grouping them together and providing clustered themes. While creating both emerging and clustered themes, I looked for connections in seemingly disconnected pieces of data that could be used to create potential theories.

5. I repeated this approach across every transcript and then looked for patterns across transcripts. Across all transcripts, I eventually identified six clusters of superordinate themes, each with a number of sub-themes.

6. I wrote a narrative account of the study, writing about each theme one by one, combining themes and subthemes with relevant short extracts from the transcripts. For each theme, I extensively applied the clinical paradigm. To strictly maintain each GF’s anonymity, I deliberately chose to exclude the attribution of any excerpt to a particular GF. For example, I chose not to use anonymous labels such as GF1, GF2, etc. for any of the excerpts.
7. The final account included both the GFs’ accounts of their experiences and my own interpretive comments (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). I wrote a discussion section that connected the themes to a broader set of implications. While doing so, I challenged myself to find evidence that may contradict my proposed implications.
Findings

As illustrated below, GFs felt, almost unanimously, that attendees have a meaningful impact on them.

Excerpt 0.1

“. . . so we are the containers . . . the container is not neutral like the relationship . . . between the wine and the bottle of wine. Once the wine goes into the bottle . . . the bottle should not affect the wine. We are not the bottle. We are the oak container where the wine matures, where the wood . . . gets impacted by the wine but is also impacting the wine . . . the oak matures and it scars and scratches, and small fractures and weaker spots form, in a way, the beautiful skin of the whole that’s part of it. And we get touched because we, at the same time we are wine too . . . we are a continuity, we are the container but we are also drawn into it.”

Congruous with bi-directional paradigms of the analyst-patient dyad outlined in the literature review, especially co-participant inquiry (Fiscalini, 2006), five GFs clarified that the experience did not just impact their role and teaching but also impacted them personally:

Excerpt 0.2

“Oh, I think they impact me . . . because [I] learn different things that I may have known and learned before but then they come back as a surprise.”

Excerpt 0.3

“I think the biggest impact of the CCC on me is actually much more than on my teaching style . . . it’s much, much bigger.”
With these points in mind, in order to make further sense of the findings, I adapted the following framework from a diagrammatic representation of the EMCCC attendees’ program journey as supplied by the program directors. As illustrated below, attendees enter EMCCC with a focus on the “self”, gradually moving on to the “other” through exploration of interpersonal, family and system dynamics, and subsequently moving on to leadership, team, organizational dynamics, and the world. In contrast to this “inside-out” approach, I uncovered that GFs start “outside-in”. They have the organizations, teams, and others in mind and end up focusing on themselves too. Both GFs and attendees toggle between “inside-out” and “outside-in” perspectives and eventually shape their understanding of self, others, and the world.

**Figure 2.** Diagram adapted from program directors’ diagrammatic representation of the EMCCC journey of program attendees

In order to answer this study’s research question regarding the specific impact that attendees have on GFs, the remainder of this chapter includes findings organized under six superordinate themes:
1. Intimacy
2. Broader and deeper thinking
3. Mitigation of neurotic traits
4. Identity work
5. Broader purpose
6. Emotional labor

While every attempt has been made to present distinct themes, they are inherently interrelated. They can be visualized as embedded within epigenetic concentric circles in Figure 2: intrapersonal; interpersonal; family & system dynamics, leadership; teams and organizations; and society and the world.

1. Intimacy

Seven of the nine interviewees directly or indirectly reported feeling an intimacy that is unusual for a business school classroom. GFs spoke of intimacy as interwoven with safety, trust, shared experience, and growth (Fisher & Stricker, 1982). Analyzing GFs’ experience through the lens of the TEF framework (Long, 2016), I interpreted that some felt that the intimacy impacted both their role as GFs and them as people, while others experienced the impact primarily across one of the two dimensions.

Becoming a GF. As illustrated in the excerpt below, one GF, who is not clinically trained, felt an acute sense of intimacy at becoming a GF:

Excerpt 1.1

“...your [EMCCC wave’s] reflections had quite an impact on me. ... I walk in, I’m feeling my own anxiety, ‘Oh my goodness! How is this going to go?’ ... I think one person was ... in tears. ... the level of emotion in the room ... I don’t have that ... happening when I’m teaching ... that
was a complete shift for me (laughs) . . . instead of starting with my normal introduction . . . I started by sharing what was on my mind . . . which I never would normally do . . . the inflection point was immediate that I was transformed into a different place, a different approach, a different emotional status in front of the group than I normally would . . . or certainly if I did it wouldn't be until I knew you really well . . . so to reach that level of intimacy immediately . . . allowed me to more quickly get to . . . the heart of what I was trying to share . . . to do it in a less scientific . . . more personal way . . . that established for me a different tone . . . and I think that enabled the group then to connect to my message more effectively.”

Wilner (1975, as cited in Sexton & Sexton, 1982) has studied intimacy as “rooted within an individual and derived from intra-psychic exploration, intra-psychic exploration derived from an interpersonal exchange, and the extension of personal boundaries derived from intimate contact with the essential (unconscious) nature of another person” (p. 7). Further, Wilner (1982) suggests that humans can “objectify aspects of themselves that they represent as being outside of their own being. This allows a person to discover oneself, thus freeing one to create oneself” (p. 27).

I interpret that this intrapsychic intimacy and mental freedom is what the GF unknowingly and indirectly describes in Excerpt 1.1, for arguably one cannot feel intimate towards others without feeling intimate towards oneself. An alternate interpretation is that this GF experienced transference, which is also a kind of intimacy (Wolf, 1982). Either way, this GF experienced others’ vulnerability and, to his own surprise, became intimate with himself and felt free to feel his own repressed feelings (Searles, 1966). He seemed to have consumed an elixir that brought about a distinct vitality in him which lasted the entire day.

Reflecting on the day, he spoke about his newfound confidence in revealing feelings sooner and getting through to people in a new, emotional way, even
though his area of expertise is of a highly quantitative nature. Further, he explained how this approach could actually help him build stronger relationships with certain consulting clients such as powerful religious entities that are not typical businesses. Applying the TEF, EMCCC seemed to be transformational for this GF both as a person and in his experience and understanding of his role.

**Personal relationships.** Several GFs’ spouses have attended EMCCC. One GF experienced a new level of intimacy with his spouse, which evolved their relationship in a way they had not experienced before and impacted this GF at a deeply personal level:

Excerpt 1.2

“Questions she was pushed to ask herself and as a consequence . . . those questions were also asked to me . . . which was not a topic of discussion before . . . so I discovered new angles . . . and those conversations helped me to better understand the relationship she had with her family.”

**Ubuntu.** Another GF spoke about how his own past becomes visible to him in EMCCC, allowing him to feel a sense of intimacy through not only shared knowledge and experience but also through shared emotion:

Excerpt 1.3

“. . . I find it easier to share more. CCC attendees are often going through identity change or transitions . . . I can sympathize with them as well because of my background . . . since I did a transition myself. So I really empathize . . . with what you are going through . . . since you are making the implicit explicit in a sense . . . and I think I could in my teaching . . . offer more of my personal experiences going through that phase . . .
usually, I don’t do that as much in executive programs.”

This GF also spoke about program attendees being mirror images of him, only 20 years younger. I was surprised upon hearing this, since many EMCCC attendees are actually older than him. I interpreted that implicit in the GF’s comment was his instinct and yearning to help both the program attendees and his own younger self, given the benefit of hindsight. I reasoned that this GF wanted to become more closely connected with program attendees, who perhaps can or will eventually understand the GF’s own suffering and transition in a way that many others cannot:

Excerpt 1.4

“I can relate to you more as potential colleagues/friends . . . you are my past future self . . . you become me in a figurative sense in 20 years . . . when I see you I see me 20 years ago . . . how I express myself . . . as if I am speaking with my younger brothers.”

In essence, I interpreted that the EMCCC experience allowed this GF’s sense of “I-ness” to be transcended (Mahrer, 1982), resulting in him feeling an intimacy with his “brothers” and achieving a purpose that transcends his ego and his role’s accountability. This sense of “self through others” can be described through the concept of Ubuntu, which is an idea from South Africa and refers to a sense of “connection, community, and caring” (“Ubuntu (philosophy),” n.d.). Desmond Tutu, South African leader of the anti-apartheid movement and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, described Ubuntu as, “My humanity is inextricably bound up in yours” (Torgovnick, May 2013, para 5).
2. Broader and Deeper Thinking

All GFs found EMCCC to be intellectually stimulating. It opened up new avenues of thinking and exploration, which go beyond typical challenges and discourses in business school programs. Converging with discussions in the literature review related to analysts learning from their patients and developing self-insight, several GFs reported that EMCCC participants triggered deep personal reflections, enhanced their self-awareness, and made them see familiar things differently or become familiar with new things. In terms of the TEF, attendees seem to help GFs’ thinking in both their role and as persons. In addition, in some cases GFs reported that lessons learned from attendees led them to rethink some time-honored aspects of EMCCC itself.

Alternative perspectives. One interviewee, whose research interests lies in understanding decision-making through the application of quantitative methods, commented on how EMCCC helps generate new ideas:

Excerpt 2.1

“It is a very interesting audience to teach because typically it raises different questions, alternative angles to the topic . . . I get excited. . . I can think about alternative ways of bringing across the same material… intellectual excitement.”

In stark contrast, one GF described teaching in the MBA program:

Excerpt 2.2

“. . . one big block . . . always the same year after year . . . always the same and no big surprises.”
Inspiration. One GF spends relatively more time teaching outside of EMCCC. Yet, he credits EMCCC attendees as a source of inspiration:

Excerpt 2.3

“CCC attendees are practitioners who are the prime consumers, and also the prime inspirers [sic] of my work. It’s not unusual that someone will call me up and say, ‘Oh . . . you wouldn’t believe what happened to me. You should write about this.’”

“Power” of the unconscious. Many EMCCC modules involve live participant cases, as opposed to pre-planned case studies. Individuals can volunteer to present a case related to an issue that is personally or professionally important to them. Program attendees and GFs then get a chance to share their reflections and free associations, which the case presenter is free to utilize or dismiss. In one such case in a particular module, a GF shared the following experience:

Excerpt 2.4

“And this was a guy . . . And I had these thoughts, I don’t know where the hell they came from, I said . . . I keep thinking . . . you feel like the Jews whom the Nazis make their emissaries in the concentration camp because some of the Nazis had to carry out duties . . . that were too traumatic for them, so they said we will have them do that work. And of course . . . these men that did that work were now really suffering, they were going to be tortured and killed too, but now they had to do some of this themselves. So I said to him . . . somehow I have a feeling that you’re like these kind of Jews that feel so terrible like they’ve woken up and discovered they’ve become Nazis . . . having to kill their own brethren. Then . . . this guy stood up and he said to [two GFs, names withheld], ‘I know I’m not supposed to speak here, but I just have to, because something has happened that’s hit
me like lightning. I got up this morning and I turned to my wife and I said you know I have to present this story about my workplace, and I said to her, I feel like I'm a Jew that's become a Nazi and [I] have to kill Jews.’”

Long and Harney’s (2013) concept of the “associative unconscious” postulates that “‘thought’ is a social rather than an individual process” and that “thoughts exist unconsciously within the infinite of a thinking community without being the sole creation or property of any of its specific individuals.” (p. 7). When this GF went on to highlight how “highly powerful, highly invested cathetic mental contents get communicated without words”, I interpreted this experience as the power of the associative unconscious.

Contextually, it is important to note that this GF practices Judaism, as does the case participant, bringing to mind both Bion’s (1984) phrase, “thoughts in search of thinkers” and Volkan’s (2001) term “chosen trauma”. According to Volkan, “chosen trauma refers to the shared image of an event that causes a large group (i.e., ethnic group) to feel helpless, victimized and humiliated by another group” (para 1). Through projective and introjective processes, the group chooses to internalize the event. Volkan adds that,

. . . the group carries the image of the event – along with associated shared feelings of hurt and shame. During this transgenerational transmission, the image of the event emerges as a significant large-group marker; the group draws the shared image of the traumatic event into its very identity (para 1).

Throughout the interview, in spite of his extensive experience as a therapist, this GF marveled at the unconscious, as if he was rethinking the sheer power and the invisible but paradoxically indelible role of the unconscious in his life.
Rethinking boundaries, authority, roles, and tasks (“BART”). Another element of the theme of broader and deeper thinking relates to rethinking boundaries, authority, roles, and tasks (BART; Green & Molenkamp, 2005). The following extract describes one program director’s experience of this, which occurred when a program attendee going through a gender transition asked to be allowed to explicitly complete this transition within EMCCC:

Excerpt 2.5 (names anonymized)

“And what we wanted to make clear . . . avoid . . . was showing up as Frank one day and Julie the next, because we thought that would be disruptive . . . this was a space that if he wanted to he could work on it, but he could not act out . . . this CEO ultimately began putting pressure on us . . . and it’s a public case, it’s going to be published. ‘I’d like to come as Julie.’ And we said, ‘No. . . . so what you do before we start the program, and what you do after the program ends is up to you. But during the program . . . the agreement is . . . and we held fast for four or five modules. Participants started coming and saying, ‘We think you are being unrealistic . . . we’ve gone to town with Julie, we’ve met Julie, had dinner with Julie . . . why are you being so rigid?’ And we said, ‘We think it’s important to protect the boundaries.’ He came to us before Module Seven and said, ‘I’ve met with my psychiatrist, I’m getting ready to tell my board, some of them already know and the employees, I’m proceeding now with the transition . . . it seems almost crazy if I have to keep that part of my life out of here.’ And he was already getting hormone shots, and . . . it was happening . . . it was just so powerful for us. And we said, ‘We just need to bounce off, we are being utterly rigid. Are we making sense here?’ And the faculty member said, ‘No, you are absolutely right.’ . . . so we did some reality testing.”
In this extract, one program director describes being confronted with an “adaptive challenge” where there is no clear answer and which can only be overcome by building a new capacity to rethink deeply held beliefs and values (Heifetz et al., 2009). This is different from a “technical challenge” that, for example, may entail, mapping a candidate’s perspective against clear admissions criteria for an executive education program (Heifetz et al., 2009). Very few admission committees at leading business schools have likely dealt with this kind of adaptive challenge. The program director in this instance, in spite of the agreement he received from an expert INSEAD colleague, chose to rethink his role and the very definition of boundaries within the EMCCC system. His deep reflections helped him identify that his definition of boundaries may have become his personalized psychic prison, and he ultimately chose to allow the program attendee to become herself in the space that he was gatekeeping. Relating this to the TEF, in the face of disequilibrium, this GF’s adaptive capacities evolved his role and personal perspective about gender change in the program. Further, participants perhaps helped this GF pave the way for dealing with similar adaptive challenges in the future within the EMCCC system, the broader INSEAD context, and perhaps even in society.

For one GF, a confrontation led him to reflect on his role, level of confidence, and experience:

Excerpt 2.6

“. . .one of the attendees verbally attacked me... I was scheduled to do a case. I spoke...two sentences and then. . . he started shouting, ‘Stop this. Are we supposed to continue to listen to the bullshit of this so-called professor?’...full audience and I was challenged. There were colleagues. All looking; what was [I] going to do? . . . and then I decided . . . in the moment to contain it by asking, ‘Do you want to say more about it?’ And then he didn’t. Then I said, ‘Then I suggest I continue with the lecture’.”
While still shaken up, this GF went into a mode of reflective inaction, “leading at the limits of their knowledge, resources and trust” (Simpson, French & Harvey, 2002, p. 1). Simpson et al call this “negative capability”, which allowed this GF to contain (Bion, 1962) the primitive anxiety of the attendee, while still containing their own task-related anxiety (James & Clark, 2002). As illustrated in the excerpt below, this strategy worked.

Excerpt 2.7

“…in the break he came to me and said, ‘You know what, everything worthwhile that starts or threatens to become valuable in my life needs to be destroyed. It’s the story of my life.’ And he said, ‘You were a lecturer yesterday… came too close to my heart, so I needed to destroy you.”

This GF was thus able to uncover the attendee’s repetition-compulsion confrontation and effectively manage a highly unexpected situation through inaction as opposed to decisiveness. Thus, this incident constitutes a prime example of the unique skillset required of, and emotional demands placed upon, GFs in comparison with typical business school faculty.

3. Mitigation of Neurotic Traits

While observing attendees undergo the EMCCC experience, several GFs reflected on their own hidden motivations, behaviors, and relationships, and took a step towards mitigating their irrational behaviors and neurotic traits, similar to the manner in which analysts learn about their neurotic traits from patients (Fiscalini 2006; Levinson, 2007; Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2010). I choose the words “neurotic traits” in the clinical sense, meaning that the difference between neurotic and normal is that of degree (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1984). Analyzing through the TEF lens, neurotic traits in each of the three ensuing excerpts can be thought as interwoven with both GFs’ roles and with them as persons.
Anxiety. One GF felt an almost crippling task-related anxiety (James & Clark, 2002) at the prospect of EMCCC, which was particularly surprising given his undisputed professional success as an academic:

Excerpt 3.1

“I sort of almost imagined that halfway through the morning somebody might stand up and say, ‘I’m sorry but I didn’t pay to be lectured to in this program so I want you to stop now.’ . . . and so I went into it very, very anxious; much more anxious and worried than you probably think. And, and my personal thing to (laughs) to reveal all to you is I’m, I’m really, really, really afraid to speak in public, and I have been my entire life . . . and so, accepting this one was a just a continuation of basically a 30-year journey of my own which is to confront my deepest fear . . . speaking in public . . . I’m waiting for the moment in my life when I no longer feel that anxiety.”

It is possible that the anxiety described by the GF in the excerpt above is related to the GF’s personal history with an authority figure (James & Clark, 2002). Alternatively, it could be, at a more primitive level, linked to his survival (Klein, 1959). The GF may unconsciously be looking to conquer this anxiety by challenging himself in unfamiliar scenarios such as EMCCC, where he does not teach frequently. He spoke about the anxiety going away for months before it resurfaces again; this may be an unconscious thought avoidance by the GF – an “unthought known” (Bollas, 1987) – which comes to the surface when unconventional opportunities come his way. The “curing” of this neurotic symptom that this GF hopes for is likely not going to happen immediately or through unconventional teaching experiences alone. Reik (1948) points out that “neurotic symptoms do not evaporate into thin air without a trace, but they pale into insignificance” (p. 91). He explains that scars remain just like they do after a successful operation, and they may ache in stormy situations. This GF spoke
about the positive feedback he received from EMCCC attendees, which could be a therapeutic step forward.

**Sublimation**\(^9\) of long-term frustration. Another GF shared:

Excerpt 3.2

> “I had a very interesting mother who had the capacity to deny very real things . . . in our life. One sticks out of mind, but it symbolizes a number of things. And that was very frustrating.”

After a short dialogue, I chose to boldly share a theory, which was based on the aforementioned comment and on the GF’s repeated mentioning of EMCCC and the unconscious as an exhilarating experience. I inquired whether EMCCC could be exhilarating for this GF because it provides an unconscious way for him to deal with his past frustrations with his mother by helping program attendees who might have similar tendencies of denying reality. The GF exclaimed:

Excerpt 3.3

> “I think that, I think that’s a wonderful interpretation.”

I interpreted this GF as having unconsciously used the defense mechanism of **sublimation** to transform his unacceptable frustration at his mother to help for EMCCC attendees, many of whom wish to change something about their lives. Connecting my interpretation to the TEF, this GF’s role in EMCCC acted as a catalyst to help him sublimate his personal long-term frustration.

**Imposter syndrome.** Another GF spoke about using his EMCCC teaching as a platform that legitimizes content related to human dynamics, which he teaches to

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\(^9\) ‘Sublimation’ can be thought of as the transformation of unwanted impulses into less harmful or ideally helpful thoughts or actions (Lionells et al., 2015b).
other groups such as MBAs. Further into the conversation, he added:

Excerpt 3.4

“I guess it assuages the worries that I have about whether I am on the right track. So, it sort of reduces my uncertainty and my... am I full of shit? Well, perhaps not... because they found value in it.”

This GF seems to hint at elements of feeling like an imposter in spite of his being frequently recognized for teaching excellence at INSEAD. He teaches no more than three days in EMCCC in a given year, yet seems to want to leverage it to gain validation. He was also vocal about having an education and early career background that deviates from the more traditional educational background of INSEAD professors. I interpreted that EMCCC, among other responsibilities, likely functions as an ongoing object for this GF to address his neurotic imposture, which is not necessarily a pretense of humility (Kets de Vries, 2005b).

4. Identity Work

As much as the EMCCC functions as an identity experimentation and exploration space for attendees, six GFs seem to be consciously or unconsciously utilizing the EMCCC for their own identity exploration, be it their role identity, personal identity, or collective family identity. This finding is consistent with the identity work that analysts seem to engage in while working with patients.

Role identity: Validation through EMCCC. Role identities, as defined by McCall and Simmons (1978), give fundamental “meaning to our daily routine, for they largely determine our interpretations of the situations, events, and other people we encounter” (pp. 69-70). Individuals prize the role that they perceive to best represent the self, and since this perception is often based on how others see individuals in their role, role identities are relational or interpersonal in nature.
In the TEF, GFs’ role identity can be thought of as a mapping onto “role” at the intersection of GFs as persons, EMCCC as a system, and INSEAD as context. GFs reminisced about the transformational, positive impact reported by hundreds of attendees over 15 years. Testimonials and stories seemed to be an important marker for GFs to validate their role identities through the building of a new discipline that addresses a critical gap for executives’ personal growth:

Excerpt 4.1

“. . . as a discipline, we are getting more authority . . . we see networks and countries emerging and so that is very rewarding. And the attendees . . . from 67 nationalities . . . play a crucial role in it. It’s not only our project just now. We are part of it.”

Excerpt 4.2

“I made the decision to transition from . . . a clinical practice to doing this program . . . I could be involved in having much more impact.”

Excerpt 4.3

“The existence of CCC for me is an enormous affirmation . . . the fact that there are these people from . . . great organizations, interesting backgrounds, would come looking for a clinical perspective, that which I've dedicated my life to, it's an enormous affirmation that this matters.”

While providing their accounts of role identity validation, some GFs acknowledged that such validation is perhaps more salient to them than it would be to faculty in conventional programs. The clinical approach of EMCCC is relatively new in comparison to the cognitive content that has historically been an attraction for executives (Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2007). As a result, GFs’ role
and its accountability as depicted in the TEF requires detailed justification to stakeholders within the INSEAD context, many of whom view EMCCC with some ambivalence:

Excerpt 4.4

“… you normally have to almost sneak in by way of more traditional, mainstream conversation.”

Excerpt 4.5

“. . . although we are now an integral part of it and INSEAD in a way are also proud and don’t hide that we are there, but still a rather strange animal in the forest.”

Excerpt 4.6

“There were times . . . the containing function institutionally for us was not there . . . [now] I appreciate the institution . . . it’s amazing, that INSEAD let us set this up…a real experiment and everybody thought it’d fail, including us. We would finish a wave and say, ‘Probably the last one’.”

Excerpt 4.7

“We were constantly under attack . . . about the cost . . . why we even we have the program, about the fact that [GF name withheld] and I are in the program.”

**Personal identity: Mosaic and play.** Our unique personal identities are linked with our personal histories, talents, interests, roles, and experiences (Stryker, 1968). One’s personal identity thus comprises a multitude of elements, with the
relevance of each possibly changing over time. In the TEF, GFs’ personal identity can be visualized as the “circle of the person” influenced by the EMCCC system, the INSEAD context, and the broader “source” of the business school industry.

When asked what could be his fantasy or crazy idea of why he chooses to be part of EMCCC, one GF reminisced:

Excerpt 4.8

“. . . perhaps not a crazy idea, but … wild idea . . . to reinvent myself . . . so that the academic in me . . . the teacher . . . the writer . . . the poet and the philosopher . . . all aspects of myself . . . blend . . . a kind of professional identity mosaic for myself.”

I interpreted this to be the GF’s deep desire to explore and give expression to his repertoire of “possible selves” (Markus & Nurius, 1986). In one of the modules, this GF spoke about his parents’ and sibling’s passion for the arts, and it is possible that this GF has an unconscious childhood career phantasy\(^\text{10}\) influenced by early experiences with family members. During the interview, he also spoke about his parents’ guidance to put others ahead of themselves and to be of service. I believe that EMCCC acted as a transitional object\(^\text{11}\) for this GF to explore possible selves, allowing for a manifestation of his desire to better align his reality as a former psychotherapist with his unconscious childhood career fantasies to be of service to many while having artistic endeavors.

Few people are able to achieve their childhood fantasy in their lifetime without compromising at least some of its elements. In his own eyes, this GF seems to

\(^{10}\) Phantasy can be thought as an unconscious mental process. It is thus different from a ‘fantasy’, which is the act of imagining something (Fantasy, n.d.)

\(^{11}\) An object that serves the purpose of providing psychological comfort, especially while navigating an unknown or difficult situation (Winnicott, 1953).
have made significant progress towards his “ideal” self. He describes his 15 years of building and expanding EMCCC in a way that further validates my interpretation. The “main dish” and the “freedom” that he describes below likely symbolize both an escape from past psychic prisons and giant strides towards his ideal personal and role identity:

Excerpt 4.9

“This is the majority of my work and my energy. EMCCC is my distinctive professional contribution and activity and all the rest are side dishes. This is the main dish. And now also time wise but also life wise this is it.”

This GF seems to have “tailored” his role identity to align with his personal identity (Pratt, Rockmann, & Kaufmann, 2006). As he approaches retirement, EMCCC seems to be a space for him for identity work through play and active trial (Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010) at being a poet, while still fulfilling his role as a GF:

Excerpt 4.10

“I noticed . . . that I allow myself to use more and more, in a way, the poet in me, or the metaphorical expressions which I cherished . . . so I might not have time to write proper poetry, but I can satisfy and even develop part of it in my work here.”

Family identity: Visiting the “unremembered past”

Coles (2011) has written about how past, unspoken trauma of loss and hate can be particularly challenging or disruptive for current and future generations if it is not addressed. After helping EMCCC attendees address family-related issues for many years, one GF seemed encouraged and ready to uncover and understand the

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12 Inspired by and adapted from Prophecy Coles’ (2011) book The Uninvited Guest from the Unremembered Past.
repressed stories of trans-generational trauma from his grandparents’ past from World War Two:

Excerpt 4.11

“One of my grandmothers was in the concentration camps . . . the irony is that I haven’t opened that door enough in myself that I help others open . . . And I’m now at a stage in my life . . . I want to know . . . what happened with her . . . it is [currently] a black hole for upcoming generations in my family . . . I feel . . . an obligation to do more of the work of discovery and integration, what my grandmother and my parents couldn’t do because it was too difficult.”

5. Broader Purpose

Almost all GFs brought up the idea of having experienced something bigger than themselves through EMCCC, or at least feeling that they were on the path towards such an experience. Those who were clinically trained consciously referred to such a broader purpose. Those with less exposure to the clinical paradigm seemed nevertheless, perhaps unconsciously, to be looking to fulfill such a purpose.

Excerpt 5.1

“I feel that I have a huge debt to pay to you all to support this incredible life that I have. And, so I want to deliver something . . . useful.”

Excerpt 5.2

“I’m very committed to this idea of humanizing leadership . . . the lack of full consideration of humanity in the practice and the theorizing of leadership is at the core of the sense of meaninglessness and of the lack
of trust that people talk about in organizations . . . it has to do with making work more meaningful . . . making organizations more humane”

Excerpt 5.3

“[EMCCC] . . . helped me to complete my picture of humanity and value creation.”

Excerpt 5.4

“…we have 67 nationalities in EMCCC... start to see more and more clearly...the world is struggling with an international and interdependent and connected way...reflected in the reality here...rainbows of cultures ... with struggles that are to be expected...EMCCC is a compelling space where we need to create complexity and diversity...collectively think about it, make sense of it, get better at it ... a sign of hope.”

Family and Character Strengths. Both program co-directors brought up their parents while talking about warm feelings, awe, deep gratitude, fulfillment, love, and insights that they gain from helping EMCCC attendees:

Excerpt 5.5

“My sister was a nurse, my brother also a professor, and I consider those professions and . . . even this program as a service industry.”

Excerpt 5.6

“. . . [EMCCC] relates to my mission in life where my parents raised me and my brothers and sisters with a very clear message . . . live your life in order to have others in mind . . . care about them, love them, and be good
to them . . . basically life is about other people. And now the definition of others has enlarged. I went from one other or a series of others to groups of others. I went from one nationality to many.”

Here I interpret a connection between the program directors’ sense of purpose and the early guidance that they received from their parents and siblings. It could be that EMCCC represents, or is very close to the attributes of, these GFs’ childhood service-oriented fantasy careers. They might have used early caregivers as objects onto which they projected this wish, splitting the mental image of the caregiver and protectively identifying with the “good object” (Klein, 1986, pp. 184-185) aspect of the caregiver. As a result, they aspired to be in service-oriented professions, much like their caregivers.

Overall, I interpreted that GFs’ comments can be crystallized as character-building strengths: humility, wonder, gratitude, appreciation for the human condition, hope, and even spiritual growth (Peterson & Seligman, 2004). These character strengths are the “bedrock of the human condition (p. 30), represent the “psychological good life” (p. 30), and define the virtue of “transcendence”, which is a “connection to something higher – the belief that there is meaning or purpose larger than ourselves” (p. 38). Connecting with the TEF, GFs’ EMCCC experience seemed to have impelled them to find meaning, purpose, and growth way beyond their ego and role’s accountability to EMCCC or INSEAD. These findings agree with the occupational privileges, experience of deep personal growth, and positive feelings that numerous authors report in the literature review.

6. Emotional Labor

While six of the nine GFs directly spoke about the challenges of their role, they

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13 Hochschild (2003) coined the term “emotional labor”, defining it as “the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display” (p. 7).
did not frame these challenges particularly negatively. GFs may have created an empathic wall\textsuperscript{14} for themselves, but for a number of reasons, I remained convinced that tiny doors and windows in this wall resulted in at least some “spillover” (Nathanson, 1997) of some attendees’ excessive needs, unexpected demands, and negative projections. First, GFs did not speak about the negative consequences of the expectations and demands of the attendees and the program with anywhere near as much detail and reflection as they did for the other themes that emerged in this study. Second, as illustrated in Excerpt 0.1, in a metaphor for the GF-attendee relationship involving wine casks, one of the GFs used the word “beautiful” to describe scars, scratches and fractures in the surface of the oak, seemingly sublimating the negative energy towards a positive purpose. However, scars are ultimately scars. Finally, research outlined in the literature review clearly reports the potentially negative influences and occupational hazards of analysts’ work, both personally and professionally. Congruently, one GF reported feeling “used as an object” and at times “frustrated” and “unacknowledged”.

I thus theorized that, in addition to many of the positive outcomes, GFs likely experience a “dark side” of their role and work, which manifests as a meaningful degree of emotional labor. They likely feel an emotional dissonance, which Hochschild (2003) defines as the deviation between inner feelings and outward behavior. The ensuing section elaborates on my theory with some supporting data from the interviews.

**Perspective of clinically trained GFs.** Clinically trained GFs, especially the program directors, tend to spend more time with attendees than non-clinically trained GFs. They may experience being ignored, questioned, vilified, sexualized, and even deified in the program (see excerpt 2.6, as one example).

\textsuperscript{14} Nathanson (1986) has written about the concept of an “empathic wall”, which allows us to “remain ourselves in the presence of the affect of the other” (p. 175). An empathic wall allows one to toggle between empathetic and non-empathetic states through the formation of boundaries. Thus, even as one relates to others’ feelings, one is able to isolate oneself from others and focus on one’s own self.
They may therefore be expected to experience more emotional labor than visiting GFs and also be better equipped to deal with it when they do.

**Processing cost.** One GF elaborated on the effort and challenges of their role in terms of a kind of “depletion” and “psychological cost” of processing transference, projections, and defense mechanisms:

Excerpt 6.1

“... mostly what I'm aware of is how exhilarating and depleting I can feel simultaneously... Well, the depletion is hard work... I have to contain and metabolize what I am receiving, be it negative bad projects or positive good projects... it's the capacity to contain... metabolize... understand... or even recognizing... there's a transference to me of a certain kind... I might not even realize it, I don't... but when I do realize it, it's how I work with it... if people are idealizing me, I feel a little uncomfortable... it's not just appreciating, liking or admiring, it's idealizing.”

**Harmonizing professional and personal identities.** Consistent with Råbu et al. (2015), one GF spoke about the challenges of balancing family commitments against the expansion of the program to the Singapore campus and adding an additional wave each year, to make it three waves a year across France and Singapore:

Excerpt 6.2

“... what is very important is to balance all of that, and that is very personal in a way, very relevant that in order to fulfill this role, to be this container, I continue with that metaphor. I am container in the ocean, but I go all, all over the world, but I'm also a father and a husband. And how
does it match? Can I balance it with my other fundamental highly valued essential roles in life . . . I should feel ashamed if I would deprive my wife and children of what they need . . . And it would also not be sustainable for me if I would do it in a way that I would deprive myself of the love of my family . . . how can I balance myself in all of that so that I am also contained by marriage and contained by my family?”

**Perspective of visiting GFs.** Visiting GFs have to manage their anxiety related to the EMCCC environment, which they are relatively less familiar with compared to the typical MBA or executive education environment. In addition to excerpt 3.1 on managing anxiety, two others follow:

Excerpt 6.3

“…it's a little tribal [in the class].”

Excerpt 6.4

“I'm also relatively, as people in the teaching in the CCC go, I'm relatively young.”

**Where does the emotional labor go?** As discussed earlier in the section on identity work, there is at least some friction between GFs and INSEAD. It is therefore evident that the emotional labor (Hochschild, 2003) that the GFs undergo is not just restricted to their interactions with EMCCC attendees. In a way, the context, i.e. INSEAD, has also contributed to the emotional labor and the challenges that the GFs face due to issues revolving around roles, boundaries, tasks, and independence (Newton, 2012; Krantz & Maltz, 1997; Lawrence 1995). However, I believe that INSEAD has also played a useful role in contributing to EMCCC’s success and helped the GFs contain and manage their emotional labor.
GFs largely idealize their EMCCC experience and feel that they are contributing to a purpose much broader than themselves. Given this purpose and sense of transcendence (Peterson & Seligman, 2004), they seem somewhat reluctant to openly talk about the negative impact of the attendees. Rarely did GFs use words such as “overwhelmed”, “inadequate” or “depressing” to describe their experiences with attendees, in spite of the enormous effort required of them. While they spoke about peer supervision and support from other GFs, I believe that not all the issues associated with their emotional labor get worked through during supervision. As discussed in the literature review, Freud (1937) compared analyst’s work with patients to being overexposed to X-rays. It might therefore be possible that some of the emotional labor associated with the attendees is subsequently unconsciously directed by the GFs at INSEAD. INSEAD, in turn, unconsciously offers holding and containment for GFs. An interesting question to ponder upon is whether EMCCC would have survived had INSEAD not been available as a container of the negativity and emotional labor that GFs experience with participants but don’t completely share with others.
Discussion

This thesis set out to explore the research question: What impact do program attendees have on guiding figures in a transformational executive education program? Evidently, attendees have a meaningful impact on both GFs' roles and on GFs personally. Specifically, GFs reported: a high level of intrapersonal and interpersonal intimacy that is unusual for them to experience in a classroom; broadened and deepened thinking about themselves and their role; progression towards mitigating their own neurotic traits; engagement in identity work; contribution to a broader purpose; emotional labor. At a minimum, GFs learned something new about themselves or started thinking about their role differently. At the other end of the spectrum, GFs fundamentally changed the way they view themselves, others, and contemporary issues in society, and experienced a sense of transcendence. In this chapter, I will discuss key implications of my findings for the evolving narrative of business schools and the role of faculty in helping business schools transform their narrative.

Self-discovery and Identity Exploration

Congruent with the analyst-patient dynamic described in the literature review, it seemed reasonable to expect that GFs would be impacted by attendees. However, I was surprised at the extent of the impact that attendees have on GFs – both in their role and personally. I conclude that the vulnerability and need for transition that are openly expressed by attendees engenders in the GFs a deeper appreciation for the human condition. On the surface, most attendees have interesting backgrounds, successful careers, and come from well-respected organizations. However, as attendees’ hopes, fears, confusions, and need for renewal become evident, GFs experience and reveal their own vulnerability, leading to a self-intimacy that allows them to feel emotions that were perhaps repressed and remained undiscovered both in their lives and in their teaching. This self-connection, in turn, allows GFs to connect deeply with the attendees.
and to experience and share even more feelings. This reciprocal relationship transcends the typical social requirements and expectations of business school faculty, producing a sense of vitality and freedom in the GFs.

The modules start to feel like a set of shared experiences characterized by safety, trust, and a desire for growth, triggering in the GFs a sense of holding (Winnicott, 2005) and containment (Bion, 1962) that may be unavailable for them in other conventional programs. I contend that this sense of holding and containment, which is unconsciously offered by attendees to GFs, periodically results in a role reversal in EMCCC’s ID lab. It allows GFs to go on a journey of their own self-discovery and identity exploration that extends beyond their role to them as persons.

GFs are indeed like the Sherpa for the program attendees, as proposed in the introduction of this thesis. However, there are times when Sherpas themselves may be doubtful, helpless, or lost, and may need support. It is unreasonable to expect every Everest climbing Sherpa to contain themselves when they are faced with frequent changes at the Khumbu icefalls! Sometimes, the mountain climbers that the Sherpas are guiding will knowingly or unknowingly serve as the Sherpa to the Sherpa! In essence, this study highlighted that transformational executive education programs can be transformation-inducing not just for attendees but also for GFs, with attendees playing a critical role in the GFs’ transformation. As illustrated in Figure 2, attendees experience an “inside-out” transformation in that they start from the self and move to others. In contrast, GFs experience an “outside-in” transformation in that they start from others and eventually focus on the self. Both GFs and attendees toggle between “inside-out” and “outside-in” perspectives and eventually shape their understanding of self, others, and the world. Excerpt 2.5 related to a gender transition is a telling example of how attendees have influenced the GFs thinking about contemporary issues in society.
Role Validation

In interviews, the two program directors expressed gratitude for the ever-increasing support from INSEAD. On one hand, the success of the program, the burgeoning alumni network, and the GFs’ own growth encourage the program directors. However, since their approach is fundamentally unlike that of any other successful program at INSEAD or most programs at leading business schools, it poses a perpetual uphill battle for GFs in that they need to fundamentally justify their approach and role to INSEAD. As a consequence, the two program directors spoke about “proving that their approach works”, being a “strange animal in the forest”, and “building a new discipline”.

Based on the TEF and Krantz and Maltz’s (1997) work described in the literature review, I theorize that the program directors are facing a questioning of their role identity. Their personal accountability and their roles’ accountability within the EMCCC system conflicts with their roles’ accountability as understood by a constellation of powerful role holders in the broader INSEAD context. Both program directors historically took pride in being on the “fringes” and “independent”, which helped them build a new discipline over the last 15 years. However, this independence is perhaps paradoxically hindering them from accelerating the adoption of this new discipline at INSEAD. Elite institutions such as INSEAD and other leading business schools are typically adept at promoting a certain latent conformity to time honored roots of academic rigor that are fundamentally different from the emerging discipline of EMCCC. I theorize that the program directors’ atypical skills, novel approach, and desire to be “independent” may be disturbing the equilibrium across executive education at INSEAD, other role holders’ institutional role history at INSEAD, and INSEAD’s institutional history as a powerful role holder among business schools. In the extreme case, program directors may have experienced INSEAD as having retreated to a state of psychotic defense with a “totalitarian state of mind” towards EMCCC, such as when one of them spoke in excerpt 4.7 about being...
“constantly under attack” related to costs. This would be consistent with the idea of totalitarian states of mind in institutions as a mechanism to avoid dealing with change (Lawrence, 1995). The time honored way of doing things represented by a totalitarian state of mind likely “symbolizes certainty and the hatred of the complexity of reality” (Lawrence, 2003, p. 353). Programs such as EMCCC are this new reality of executive education and likely need to be embraced by business schools.

Attention will now turn to situating the GFs’ experiences in the broader landscape of executive education. In terms of the TEF, potential global shifts underway in the value of higher education and role of business schools may be provoking a change in “source”.

Role of Faculty in Transforming Business Schools’ Narrative

As discussed in the introduction and the literature review, in order to meet changing demands, business schools will likely increasingly offer executive education programs such as INSEAD’s EMCCC that combine cognitive content with a clinical paradigm (Zaleznik & Kets de Vries, 1985), providing a reflective and experiential environment of an ID Lab (Korotov 2005, 2006). This might be considered the “new narrative” of business schools.

As is evident from this study, the mindset, skills, and capabilities required of faculty to lead such programs are meaningfully different from those required in conventional courses. By definition, an ID lab such as EMCCC focuses on deeply personal questions and the meaningfulness of an inner journey as opposed to commercially valuable answers found in programs such as a traditional MBA. In such transformational programs, faculty’s role is not to teach but to create the space for attendees to learn. Faculty is not expected to have all the answers; they constantly deal with an “indeterminate zone” of practice (Schon, 1983) where there are no clear frameworks, answers, precedents, or
even truths.

To be successful in such programs, faculty need to cultivate their “negative capability” (Simpson, et al., 2002), develop an adaptive capacity to define and solve problems which may have heretofore been unexpected (Heifetz et al., 2009), and thrive in their attempt to awaken rather than teach others. They need to approach teaching not as a performance but as a reflective practice focused on deep learning for both attendees and them (Schon, 1983; Tompkins, 1990).

In this study, GFs reported an overwhelmingly positive experience with EMCCC in spite of the inherent challenges of being a GF. As illustrated in this study’s findings, such an experience can trigger in them a new or renewed sense of empathy, genuineness, intimacy, freedom, play, learning, and self-discovery that may not be easily available in other conventional programs where teaching becomes repetitive after a few semesters. I contend that this serves as a powerful metaphorical voice for a new kind of role and developmental experience that business school faculty need to support not only business schools’ narrative but also their own narrative. Through such a role and experience, GFs will be able to engage in their own identity work and further develop as both GFs and as people as a precursor to helping managers who periodically face adaptive dilemmas, self-doubt, and role-related crises (Bailey, Saparito, Kressel, Christensen, & Hooijberg, 1997).

Yet, faculty in business schools are not always encouraged or do not explicitly ask for such experiences given the institutional contextual history and the traditional role of faculty. From early on in their career, business school scholars are typically rewarded less for a deep, personal involvement and more for an impersonal stance and the production of expertise (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2015; Spender & Khurana, 2013). They may understandably be uncomfortable playing a more adaptive role because of inexperience or fear of low end-of-course ratings from students. Their social role as faculty may carry the expectation or even the requirement to come across as omniscient, in control of the agenda, and front and center of the classroom (Goffman, 1959). In essence, there may
be a difference between the historical role *given* to faculty by business schools and future roles *unconsciously desired* by faculty (Krantz & Maltz, 1997).

Tompkins (1990) writes about this fundamental flaw in the teacher’s performance model in that it separates the teacher’s behavior from how the teacher really feels. The teacher is split into two parts: a backstage self who acknowledges the limits of their expertise, and the other who gets students to believe in their omniscience. Teachers almost seem to be performing for and seeking approval from teachers that taught them. Consistent with the idea of *role unconsciously desired versus role given*, Tompkins advocates teachers having an attitude that is more attuned with their own needs as human beings instead of one focused on a never-ending striving towards “professional and institutional standards of arguable merit” (p. 660). Programs such as EMCCC seem to emphasize the former, where GFs remove themselves from center stage, express their vulnerability, emphasize inquiry and imagination rather than outcomes alone, and ultimately serve the whole development of both attendees and of themselves.

To ultimately arrive at their new narrative, business schools need to make such programs “mainstream” and not just “a strange animal in the forest”, as mentioned in excerpt 4.5. GFs’ potential needs to be harnessed strategically; not as an interesting one off exercise or program. Young faculty who show an interest in becoming GFs must be systematically mentored by experienced GFs, with robust support from business schools. This will help young faculty enhance their personal involvement in teaching, embrace a vulnerable stance, accept some risk, face some narcissistic injuries, and learn from reflection (Petriglieri and Petriglieri, 2015; Spender & Khurana, 2013). In his famous 1916 essay titled *The Aims of an Education*, the noted philosopher Andrew Whitehead (as cited in Harrison et al., 2007 p. 341) spoke about how a high quality higher education entails a sense of openness, vulnerability, emotional exposure, curiosity, and engagement. In the business school of the future, I contend that faculty who go through similar experiences themselves will significantly enhance their potential to transform teaching, humanize leadership, help executives engage in identity
work, and ultimately write the future narrative of business schools (Petriglieri and Petriglieri, 2015).

Limitations & Future Directions

Limitations

This study has a few key limitations. First, it does not include program attendees’ perspectives about their impact on the GFs. Second, consistent with the IPA methodology, I used a small sample size of nine GFs. Even though I made every attempt to be comprehensive in the data collection and analysis, the findings of this study must be understood as contextually specific. Third, most of the interviewees were Caucasian and male, so findings may not represent the experiences of a demographically diverse set of GFs. Fourth, I am myself an attendee of the EMCCC program. As a result, although I put in significant effort to limit my own unconscious biases as an “insider” in the program (Ramarajan, McGinn, & Kolb, 2012), they may have impacted the study. Finally, consistent with Goodhart’s law: “when a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a good measure” (“Goodhart's law”, n.d., para 1), interviewed GFs may have been cautious of their level of openness and candor.

Future Research

This study focused on understanding the impact that attendees at a transformational executive education program have on the program’s GFs. It opens up a number of avenues for further exploration. First, an IPA study of program attendees could open up new perspectives about how they impact GFs. The similarity or dissimilarity between attendees’ experiences of impacting GFs and GFs’ experiences of being impacted by attendees may lead to meaningful insights for researchers. Second, a longitudinal study to understand the attendees’ impact on GFs over multiple waves may be informative. For example,
one might explore how GFs’ identity work evolves across a decade, and this could lead to useful insights related to the role of attendees in GFs’ own mid-life transitions. Finally, future studies could deeply explore the GFs’ role in helping business schools craft a new narrative and outthink potential competitors such as leading consulting firms and corporate universities. Each of the aforementioned avenues can be supported with a more in-depth application of the TEF lens than has been the case in this study.
Conclusion

In his book *The Glass Bead Game*, Hesse (1990) writes a tale about Joseph and Dion, who are two well-known healers in biblical times. They have very different ways of healing others. While Joseph heals by providing patients with holding (Winnicott, 2005) and containment (Bion, 1962), Dion heals through his omniscience and his ability to provide compelling solutions. Joseph and Dion are rivals and have never met.

When Joseph, the younger of the two, grows spiritually ill and self-destructive, he is unable to heal himself. He sets out on a journey to find Dion and seek his help. During his journey he meets an older traveler, who offers assistance in the search for Dion. During their travels, this fellow traveler reveals his identity; miraculously, he turns out to be Dion, the very person that Joseph needed.

Dion offers the younger Joseph refuge in his home. He first expects Joseph to be his servant. Subsequently, he upgrades Joseph to the status of a student. Eventually, he treats Joseph as a peer and a colleague. Many years down the road, Dion falls fatally ill. On his deathbed, Dion reminisces about how Joseph felt it was seemingly miraculous for Joseph to unknowingly find Dion when he needed him the most. Dion then confesses that meeting Joseph was no less a miracle for Dion for he too had fallen at his lowest and felt spiritually empty, resulting in him embarking on a journey to seek help from Joseph. In essence, they were each both healer and patient, each helping the other in different ways – conscious and unconscious.

Many aspects of this story remind me of this study. In a safe space, GFs and program attendees experienced their own humanity while experiencing others’ humanity. While playing the role of GF, as opposed to professor or academic, EMCCC’s GFs discovered, rediscovered, or even transformed something not only about their role but also something about themselves (Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2010), with conscious or unconscious help from attendees. In
retrospect, the GFs needed the attendees as much as the attendees needed the GFs for each of them to develop further as whole persons.

To successfully craft their new narrative “interlinked to personal growth and maturation” (Harrison et al., 2007, p. 339), business schools need to evolve from being the omniscient Dion or Freud’s “blank screen” interpretive authority (Lionells et al., 2015a). Instead they need to be more like Joseph who offers holding and containment, and Ferenczi, who dared to explore “mutual analysis” ahead of his time (Ferenczi et al., 1988) and unknowingly paved the way for future paradigms. GFs, if strategically supported by business schools, can help them make the transition from Freud to Ferenczi, and beyond.
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Appendices

Appendix A: Participant Demographics

Demographic details of interviewed GFs in INSEAD’s EMCCC program

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<th>Gender</th>
<th>Clinically trained (Yes/No)?</th>
<th>Academic Area at INSEAD</th>
<th># of modules spent as GF in program</th>
<th>Taught in INSEAD MBA or EMBA (Yes/No)?</th>
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Appendix B: Example Research Questions

The following question was asked at the start of each interview as a “warm up” question:

- In Module 1, we are encouraged to think about our crazy fantasy for why we are in EMCCC. I was wondering if I could ask you the same question. What is your crazy idea for why you are in EMCCC?

Depending on the response to the above question, I utilized a variety of open-ended probes, such as silence; asking the interview to “unpack that for me”, “talk more about that”, “interesting, please elaborate a bit”; or, a series of “why” questions, to start a broader dialogue. Follow up questions were structured within the TEF without my dictating the agenda or the flow of the conversation if the GF wished to focus on another related or unrelated aspect of his/her experience in EMCCC.

Examples of questions asked include the following.

- What are the various roles you play in EMCCC?
- How do attendees impact you?
- My understanding is that you already have enough of a teaching load and there is no requirement for you to be in EMCCC. So why do you choose to be in EMCCC? Why do you choose to keep coming back?
- Imagine a scenario where you no longer are part of EMCCC. How would you describe yourself pre- and post-EMCCC?
- What do you dislike about EMCCC?
- How do see yourself in EMCCC versus the MBA program (for GFs who are also faculty in the MBA program)?
- What role can EMCCC play in the future at INSEAD?
- Is there anything else that you would like to share?
Appendix C: Module Content

Modules One and Two focus on building a foundation of intrapersonal and interpersonal clinical concepts to better understand the self and others. Key concepts discussed include the role of the unconscious, transference, defense mechanisms, and active listening. Self-disclosure is encouraged in small groups. Attendees are also introduced to theories of object relations and techniques for the management of ambivalence, resistance, and anxiety. Module Three focuses on family-systems theory, and helps make the connection between attendees’ past positive and dysfunctional family dynamics and current organizational experiences. Attendees typically become particularly comfortable with being open and vulnerable by this module. The program becomes more experiential starting in Module Four, which provides an opportunity for comprehensive 360 feedback and a personality audit, with the goal of enhancing intrapersonal and interpersonal effectiveness through a group coaching format and a follow up personal development plan. Module Five sets the scene for a simulation, where attendees experience the complexity and unconscious dynamics of groups and organizations within the context of a multi-party business negotiation. Module Six spans the intricacies of individual and organizational change processes and value creation in organizations. In addition, attendees are encouraged to think about their own working identity and possible future selves. In Module Seven, attendees learn about organizational social identities, cross-cultural management, values, and spirituality. Module Eight is focused on consolidating the overall experience and planning a transition out of the program.
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