ECOPSYCHOLOGISTS' VITAL IMPORTANCE IN THE TIME OF CLIMATE CRISES

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Dedication

I dedicate this project to my two boys Leon Ray and Westley Jake that they may know and love the earth with intimacy and reverence and to all the mamma's who typed their dissertations one handed with nursing babes upon their laps, and to my horse Sonny, my first eco therapist, who's lessons of life and joy for adventure still guide me.

ABSTRACT

ECOPSYCHOLOGISTS' VITAL IMPORTANCE IN THE TIME OF CLIMATE CRISES

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Ecopsychology is a systems-based philosophy that expands the therapeutic lens to include client interactions with and perceptions of the natural environment as an integral element of well-being or pathology. Ecopsychology, known forward as EP, also looks at the pathology of our culture and what kind of diagnoses lead to practices that put our planet at risk. In recent decades, the field has amassed a substantial amount of empirical evidence supporting its effectiveness but remains largely underutilized. First generation EP suggested a cultural reordering shifting away from consumer culture and reordering our way of life. Second generation posits working within the current structure is sufficient. They seek to green psychology, meaning utilizing nature as a healing medium, and gather empirical evidence to bring credibility to the field. Most researchers and practitioners agree a new perspective is needed to challenge the dominant social paradigm which views nature and the earth as expendable and separate from human health. As the current political climate becomes more central, there is need for "green" psychologists who are prepared to handle climate refugees, climate change, and mass extinction. By interviewing experts, this phenomenological study seeks to demystify EP while exploring future directions, as well as obstacles, to making it a legitimized field. This research also lends support to ecopsychology, and its applied practice known as ecotherapy as a viable and necessary treatment approach to a range of psychopathologies including anxiety, depression, and ADHD. This dissertation is available in

open access at AURA (https://aura.antioch.edu) and OhioLINK ETD Center (https://etd.ohiolink.edu).

Keywords: biophilia hypothesis, climate change, eco-alienation, eco-anxiety, ecofeminism, ecology, ecopsychology, ecopsychologist, ecotherapy, nature, mental health, pathology, phenomenology,

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Ecopsychology is a field of inquiry that expands the therapeutic lens to include client interactions with and perceptions of the natural environment as fundamental elements of well-being or pathology (Roszak, 2001). Its focus includes testing and exploring what an integral approach to healthy nature relations could look like (C. Chalquist, personal communication, February 18, 2021). Ecopsychologists posit that a large part of our pathology stems from a narcissistic viewpoint that is born from our disconnection to the natural world (Fisher, 2013). Ecopsychology also looks at the pathology of our culture which promotes domination, exploitation, and destruction of the human habitat (which is the very basis of our survival as a species) in pursuit of financial gain (Fisher, 2013; Roszak et al., 1995).

In recent decades we have seen what most consider undeniable evidence of climate change (Lejeusnes et al., 2010; Pacheco, 2020). The effects of climate change include record breaking temperatures which cause heat waves and fires, an increased risk of food- and water-borne diseases, diminished food production in economically disadvantaged regions, rising sea levels, and adverse effects of climate-altering pollutants including carbon dioxide (Lee, 2007; Smith et al., 2009).

Therapists with an ecopsychology background believe their clients are either consciously or unconsciously affected by the climate crises. These crises are conceptualized as a collective outgrowth of man's physical, psychological, spiritual, and emotional disconnection from nature (referred to as psychological dualism); practicing ecopsychologists strive to build resilience in their clients. A common approach is to help the clients acknowledge and understand how they are personally being affected by the climate crises (and or environmental degradation) and then to empower them to help heal the earth while healing themselves. A large component of this healing

comes from no longer being psychically isolated, acknowledging one's place in the greater system of nature, and also tending to feelings of helplessness, guilt, and overwhelm (Davenport, 2017; Macey, 2012).

To address the psychological effects of our disharmony with nature, ecopsychology arguably needs to take its place within the greater field of psychology. There are divisions and concerns within the fields of ecopsychology and ecotherapy about how to have the greatest impact in eliciting change in clients and society. Ecopsychology is a dynamic and emerging field (Greenway, 1999). This project involves interviewing experts, who are also the founders of ecopsychology and who can comment on how the field has evolved, which is valuable in understanding ecopsychology's impact on mainstream psychology. This study explores the research questions: How is ecopsychology defined by experts in the field? Should all psychologists be trained in ecopsychology? How is ecopsychology used in case conceptualization?

Many activists, ecopsychologists, and researchers have devoted their life's work to mitigating climate crisis. Most visibly in recent news, Gretta Thunberg started the Fridays For Future movement in August of 2018 and delivered what quickly became an iconic speech to Parliament in March of 2019. She pleaded for action from world leaders and policy makers: "I want you to panic . . . I want you to act as if you would in a crisis. I want you to act as if the house was on fire because it is." Ecopsychology acknowledges the climate crises and its effect on humans which results in many suffering from an unacknowledged yet prevalent level of panic, panic that has seeped into the unconscious background and become part of "anxiety as a

lifestyle." The media labeled this concept eco-anxiety [1] and the term is now used in the field of ecopsychology.

Individuals experiencing eco-anxiety feel overwhelmed with the enormity of the task of acknowledging the climate crises, while others are unwilling or unable to face the guilt of their personal contribution. Meanwhile, consumeristic business practices involve the pursuit of money and short-term profits at great cost to the environment. From an ecopsychological lens, this is not sane. According to this lens, our culture is insane in that it practices ecocide, in other words, our collective irresponsibility towards the environment is akin to "burning our house down."

Within the field there is a myriad of views around ecopsychology's role. Some feel activism is a key element and that psychologists need to shed their distance from politics and not only get involved but encourage their clients to participate in activism as a tool for recovery. Others simply practice ecotherapy, utilizing nature in a therapeutic context without engaging with the larger philosophy of ecopsychology and without encouraging or even participating in activism.

The American Psychological Association (APA) has acknowledged the effects of climate crises on the human psyche. Beginning in 2009, they have gathered a task force of expert panels who have since issued three reports as a step towards preparing the psychological community to respond. According to these reports, the psychological community will be called on to treat climate refugees as well as populations suffering from the psychological and neurological

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[1]The American Psychological Association first defined eco-anxiety in 2017 as "a chronic fear of environmental doom." Eco-anxiety refers to persistent worries about the future of Earth and the life it shelters. Related terms—"climate change distress," "eco-trauma," "eco-angst," and "ecological grief," to name a few—acknowledge that this concern often involves symptoms beyond those of anxiety alone.

impacts of climate crises. Children are the most vulnerable casualties. According to a 2014 UNICEF report, weather-related disasters, such as floods, droughts, hurricanes, and cyclones, directly affected an estimated 66.5 million children worldwide every year from 1990–2000, and such events are expected to affect 175 million children per year over the upcoming decades. Pacheco (2020) illustrates the severity for children living in megacities such as Mexico City, who have been exposed to air pollution all their lives and have a myriad of physical and mental health issues such as neurological inflammation, early histological hallmarks for Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases, volumetric decreases in brain tissue, and cognitive dysfunction. There are also increased risks of health problems associated with maternal exposures during pregnancy, such as preterm delivery or low birth rate neurodevelopmental disorders such as autism spectrum disorder, schizophrenia, and mood disorders; heart conditions; asthma; aero allergies and eczema; and metabolic conditions, type 2 diabetes, or weight problems, increases the morbidity and mortality that climate change will bring to children (Lieu et al., 2016).

Psychologists will be called on to help mitigate effects of climate change. When treating clients, ecopsychologists incorporate the assumption that we are psychologically suffering from bearing witness to and contributing to the "burning of our house" and use this knowledge as motivation to save our planet. Ecopsychologists recognize the planet as being in a state of emergency. It is should be recognized that not just ecopsychologists, but all psychologists, have a duty as appointed healers to address with clients the psychological effects of climate change and to alter the destructive behaviors of our culture as a whole.

Ecopsychology

Ecopsychology, a term coined by Robert Greenway in 1963, (Doherty, 2010) and was popularized by ecopsychologist Theodore Roszak, is the study of the interplay between human

psychology and the state of the natural world. Specifically, ecopsychology seeks to bring ecological concepts into the psychological field and to develop a psychological perspective within the environmental movement. Ecopsychology draws a metaphor between treatment of the natural environment and the treatment of the interior, or intrapsychic space. Ecopsychology extends the idea of "environment" to include the client's relationship with the natural world as an integral aspect of assessment and treatment. This idea of holistic connection and the impossibility of separating an individual from their environment fuels the philosophy and practice behind ecopsychology and its therapeutic application, ecotherapy.

Shepard (1982) drew the connection that our current ecological crises reflect the spiritual, emotional, and mental disease rampant in the twentieth century. Roszak (2001) openly questioned Western culture's "sanity," arguing the destruction of home/earth is evidence of collective madness and argued "collective alienation is at the root of both the environmental crisis and individual neurosis" (p.277). One way to conceptualize this is if someone were to mistreat their home by introducing toxic chemicals, and providing little to no maintenance, the environment would quickly deteriorate and become uninhabitable. Not properly caring for one's physical body and environment can indicate problems with reasoning and possible thought and/or mood disorders. For this reason, when psychologists conduct an intake, the client's exterior presentation is examined to provide insight to their interior world. Ecopsychologists suggest that our lack of capacity for recognizing our interconnectedness with and role in caring for the environment is a marker for pathology.

Ecotherapy

Ecotherapy is a systems-based therapeutic application of the philosophy behind ecopsychology. Pastoral counselor and Civil Rights activist Howard Clinebell introduced the

term in 1996; other terms used interchangeably are green therapy and earth-centered therapy (Buzzell & Chalquist, 2009). Ecotherapy incorporates a range of nature-based experiences that claim to enhance and restore cognitive, emotional, and physical well-being (Chalquist, 2009). Ecotherapists also seek to address eco-anxiety, a type of epistemological suffering, a sense of loneliness, depression, and helplessness resulting from a lack of connection to the planet and ambivalence towards the destruction of natural resources (Chalquist, 2009). Ecotherapy is not psychotherapy, neither does it replace psychiatry, but it challenges both modalities to re-conceptualize their view of human nature, suggesting that our healing must include the healing of the earth (Reser, 1995).

Within the field there is a range of what practitioners believe qualifies as ecotherapy. A person using the title ecopsychologist would be educated in the field and likely hold the philosophy in their approach and treatment plan, but may or may not use eco therapeutic techniques. In contrast, ecotherapists are utilizing nature in the treatment process, but may or may not align with the philosophy of ecopsychology. Even the idea of "using" nature is up for interpretation. Some feel simply holding sessions in a green space is "ecotherapeutic" while others make the firm distinction that actual ecotherapy involves three distinct aspects, those being the therapist, the patient, and nature itself. There has been controversy within the field as to whether utilizing ecotherapy is "enough" or if this is furthering the commodification of nature and detracts from the greater issues plaguing our planet and damaging our mental health.

State of Current Research

Ecopsychology is gaining momentum as evidenced by degrees being offered by universities on the graduate level. There are also various workshops and certificate courses available for both licensed therapists and the general public. Ecotherapy, the applied practice of

ecopsychology, is now an umbrella term which includes but is not limited to, animal assisted therapy, wilderness therapy, forest bathing, and others. Clients are prescribed “park prescriptions” and “green hours” for mild to moderate depression and ADHD symptoms. In England, these prescriptions have replaced medication on a large scale. This will be discussed at length in the literature review.

In recent decades, the field has amassed a substantial amount of empirical evidence supporting its effectiveness, yet ecotherapy remains at the fringes of the larger field of psychology. Despite disagreements in the field about what constitutes ecotherapy, there are marked correlations between time spent inside and increased pathology. Studies have revealed that regular exposure to green areas promoted attention restoration, supportive social groups, self-discipline, moderation of stress, improved behavior and reduced symptoms of ADHD (Kaplan, 1995; McCormick, 2017; Taylor & Kuo, 2009) and a reduction in psychological pathologies such as, depression and anxiety (Marselle et al., 2015). However, despite the mounting empirical evidence, nature continues to be a drastically underutilized mental health resource.

Ecopsychology: The Conflict in the Field

Due to its radical roots, as well as its innate challenges to our capitalist and consumer society, ecopsychology has largely been discounted and has struggled to make its philosophy influence mainstream psychology. Philosophical tenants, including the idea of using a psychological approach to increase effectiveness in environmental activism, have failed to have significant influence. Beyond the field being marginalized, there is a philosophical differing among its members that has come to be known as a generational divide.

Doherty (2009) labeled this philosophical divide as first generation and second generation. First generation is rooted in radical, counter-culture ideals that call for a cultural reordering that places a symbiotic relationship with the environment as of paramount importance. The emotional bonds of human and planet are seen as integral to health. Healing is obtained through direct interaction with nature. There is a need for activism and recognizing oneself as implicitly connected to the planet and its cycles. First generation thinking is critical of mainstream psychology and resists the induction of ecopsychology into it. They feel if mainstreamed, the field would be irrevocably altered diminishing the potency of its teachings. The lack of unification has perhaps divided the field's energetic focus.

Second generation thinking reflects a more measured approach, striving for small changes within the system. Here ecopsychology is conceptualized as the philosophical origins behind ecotherapy and a medium for helping society to "green;" meaning to utilize nature in a range of professional settings such as hospitals, schools, and prisons to facilitate greater wellbeing. Additionally, second generation thinkers want to move away from counterculture stigma and place emphases on empirical evidence.

Research Questions

This dissertation will explore the following research questions: (a) How is ecopsychology defined by experts in the field? (b) Should all psychologists be trained in ecopsychology? (c) How is ecopsychology used in case conceptualization? (d) What has kept or is keeping EP from becoming more "mainstreamed"? (e) What can be done to allow greater accessibility to the field of ecopsychology and ecotherapy?

Purpose of Study

In the era of climate change, it is vitally important that the field of ecopsychology gains greater accessibility and utilization. In this paper I will interview experts in the field to obtain understanding experientially of their views about the future of ecopsychology (known forward as EP). The experts interviewed will have written extensively and no doubt have strong opinions surrounding the controversy regarding the future of EP. The purpose of this research is to determine these experts' thoughts and feelings at the time of the interview in contrast to their previously published work. This is of particular interest because EP is by definition a changing, growing philosophy. The project also seeks to decipher the level of despair or hope in this time of climate change among the experts. Utilizing the richness of interview data adheres to the tenant of EP that promotes multiple ways of knowing rather than the reductionist, mechanistic knowledge, gained from scientific method. This project seeks to highlight the value of EP. By interviewing experts and determining their views in present time, I hope to reveal hidden obstacles, possibilities, and or new directions for unification of the field.

At the present time, many professionals within the field of psychology have limited knowledge of ecotherapy's documented benefits for a variety of populations. An increase in knowledge about these benefits as reported by colleagues will assist mental health professionals with expanding the range of therapeutic interventions at their disposal. This project could also assist professionals who are interested in helping build environmentally responsible communities and fostering healthier environmental attitudes and behaviors in clients.

Methodology

This paper conducted a study using the qualitative research design in the form of expert interviews. An exploratory approach was utilized to facilitate greater understanding of the field

including its strengths, limitations, and reasons for and against greater induction into and utilization of ecopsychology within the larger fielded psychology.

A uniform email (See Appendix A) was sent to 20 experts in the field of ecopsychology to inquire about willingness to take part in this study. A brief description of the study was attached. The following nine subjects agreed to approximately one-hour interviews conducted over Skype: Linda Buzzell, Allen Kanner, Thomas Doherty, Marc Pilisuk, Dan Lion, John Scull, Patricia Hasbach, Lesley Davenport, and William Hafford.

Of the participants interviewed, there were four who were predominantly first generation thinking, two second generation, and two straddlers meaning they saw themselves in both generations. There was also one participant who did not fit into any of these categories.

Participants ranged from original founding members of the field who have been publishing within academia to self-educated participants who solely focus on living and teaching the embodied tenants of ecopsychology. Participants also include those who focus on activism and political commentary.

Definition of Terms

In this project “natural environment” and “nature” are used interchangeably and refer to the physical world collectively, including plants, animals, the landscape, and other features and products of the earth, as opposed to humans or human creations. Nature can be experienced in one’s backyard. This is different from wilderness, which for this paper, is distinguished as going away from man-made or built world and deeper into the natural environment. Wilderness is an important concept for ecopsychology as it acknowledges nature on its own terms and allows it to become a source of inspiration and comfort that often finds a home within the human psyche (Greenway, 1995; Ulrich, 1984).

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

This next chapter will review the relevant literature on ecopsychology. Ecopsychology views man as part of and not separate from nature. Ecopsychologists such as Roszak (1992a) echo the fundamental idea that therapists cannot treat people without taking into account the impact of the modern environment on our non-modern brains. Highlighted are contributing theories such as the biophilia hypothesis, Attention Restoration Theory (ART), and Stress Reduction Theory (SRT), which emphasize time in nature as an essential element for human health. Evidence is provided for the notion that mankind needs wildness to be fully human and that to thrive mentally and emotionally depends on preserving this evolutionary connection to a non-built environment.

EP arose from the recognition of the environmental crises and the need to make cultural and global shifts in our thinking about how we interact with nature and natural resources to preserve our planet and restore mental health. However, this direct challenging of existing cultural paradigms, as well as the suggested reordering of established scholastic fields, is seen as radical and often experienced as threatening (Fisher, 2012). Fisher (2012) defines radical as those who "seek change in social institutions and practices, psychological structures (such as personality, identity, consciousness, and needs), root metaphors, philosophical premises, worldviews, and so on" (p. 80). EP's founders sought to expand the field of psychology within an environmental context.

Environmental psychology, which began in the late 1960s, is the study of the interrelationship between the built and natural environment and human behavior. Ittelson et al. (1974) explained, "the natural environment is studied as both a problem area, with respect to environmental degradation, and as a setting for certain recreational and psychological needs"

(p. 6). In this next section, the psychological necessity for ecopsychology is explored within the context of being part of multiple frameworks for looking at the importance of nature to mental and physical health, including environmental psychology and the conservation sciences. Ecopsychology is part of a growing collection of environmental and conservation psychologies that have produced large amounts of scientific data to prove the importance of nature and environment to mental and physical health. The history and central philosophies of ecopsychology will also be expounded upon with some discussion of the influence of the feminist approach as foundational to ecopsychology.

Biophilia Hypothesis

Biologist Edward Wilson introduced the biophilia hypothesis in his book *Biophilia* (1984). The biophilia hypothesis is biologically and ecologically based and points to evolutionary research to propel the argument that nature is essential for human health.

Environmental scientists agree that:

> the overwhelming evolutionary experience of human beings as a species involves natural environments, and we are therefore predisposed to resonate with these surroundings, consciously or not. We consequently come away from them with an increase in our positive affect and decrease in our negative feelings or stress. (Bratman et al., 2012, p. 121)

According to the biophilia hypothesis, we are biologically engineered to live in nature. Gullone (2000) sums up Wilson's integral point, "The brain which modern members of our species have inherited must be a product of this evolutionary process—a brain attuned to extracting, processing, and evaluating information from the natural environment" (p. 295). Wilson's (1989) argument suggests that in the short 200 years since our divorce with nature, the biophilic learning rules have not been replaced. Thus, our cognitive ability to "cope" with modern life is extremely limited as we have not been prepared, from an evolutionary standpoint, to have the split with nature we now experience.

The following section will highlight evidence to link deprivation of natural environments and consequences on human health for all demographics.

Empirical Research on Mental Disorders and Deprivation of Natural Environment

The National Health and Medical Research Report (NH and MRC, 1997) listed "living in the later decades of the century as a risk factor for developing depression in young people" (as cited in Gullone, 2000, p. 309). They suggest this separation could be contributing to mental disorders such as drug addiction, depression, and suicidal behavior as well as an increase in crime (Rutter & Smith, 1997). Lack of time spent in nature may be causing or contributing to these issues, and other causes could be more demanding jobs, greater time spent commuting, dietary issues, or countless other variables. However, proponents of the biophilia hypothesis claim that regardless of the other contributing factors, separation from nature places significant stress on the human system (Kellert & Wilson, 1995).

Bratman et al. (2012) conducted a lengthy and comprehensive review of the impacts of nature experience on human cognitive function and mental health, including measures of memory, attention, concentration, impulse inhibition, and mood. Though the causal effect has not been pinpointed, it has been documented that urban settings, as opposed to rural, place greater taxing processing demands on cognitive functions resulting in cognitive overload and attention fatigue, causing more stress (Bratman et al., 2012).

Discussed below are two central explanatory theories from environmental psychology around the psychological impact of built environments on cognition: Attention Restoration Theory (ART) and Stress Reduction Theory (SRT).

ART

Developmental psychologists Kaplan and Kaplan are credited with Attention Restoration Theory (ART). In ART, the attention-drawing quality of urban settings is referred to as "hard fascination" or directed attention and requires intense focus that leads to mental fatigue. In contrast, the attention people give to their natural environment is called "soft fascination" and allows the executive system (the frontal lobes) that regulates directed or "hard fascination" to rest (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989). Two of the studies they reference to inform their theory were by Hartig et al. (1991), which demonstrate the link the between restorative experiences and information-processing effectiveness, central in establishing the distinct role of directed attention (Kaplan, 1995). The first study compared wilderness vacationers with urban vacationers and a non-vacationing control group. After their trip, the wilderness group showed a significant improvement in proofreading performance, a task that is highly demanding of directed attention. The non-wilderness groups showed a pre-test-to-post-test decline (Hartig et al., 1991).

In the second study by Hartig et al. (1991), participants were randomly assigned to one of three conditions. Those in the "natural environment" and "urban environment" conditions drove to field sites where they completed attentionally fatiguing tasks before walking for 40 minutes in the respective setting. The third group also completed attentionally fatiguing tasks before participating in the passive relaxation condition of spending a comparable period listening to soft music and reading magazines. In this study, Hartig et al. used multimethod assessments of restoration which consisted of self-reports of affective states, cognitive performance, and physiological measures. Both studies offer evidence of greater restorative effects arising from experiences in nature. These were summarized in a "perceived restorativeness" score which was,

on average, highest for the natural environment group and was positively correlated (b-=0*22) with the proof-reading score. Kaplan (1995) remarked:

> What is particularly striking about these studies is how parallel the results are, despite wide variation in setting and procedure. Several of these studies are clinical- or field-oriented, an important type of research for a theory that is intended to make a difference beyond the laboratory. (p. 175)

In 2003, Hartig et al. constructed another study where they continued to research time spent in nature's restorative effect on directed attention as well as psychophysiological stress recovery. This time they used repeated measures of ambulatory blood pressure from 112 randomly assigned young adults. Again, participants completed attentionally demanding tasks just before the treatment. During the study, one group sat in a room with views of trees and another sat in a windowless room, the latter had slower decline in diastolic blood pressure. Another group walked in a nature reserve, which fostered blood pressure change that indicated greater stress reduction than afforded by those walking in the urban surroundings. Performance on an attentional test improved slightly from the pretest to the midpoint of the walk in the nature reserve, while it declined in the urban setting. This opened a performance gap that persisted after the walk. Positive affect increased and anger decreased in the nature reserve by the end of the walk; the opposite pattern emerged in the urban environment.

These studies support the notion that stress response is ignited in part by hard fascination without restorative time in nature. Vulnerability to stress response is increased due to cognitive overload and the reduction of the cognitive resources necessary to address daily burdens (Fiore et al., 1993; Peacock et al., 2007). Attention fatigue can manifest in negative emotions such as irritability, impulsiveness, impatience, reduced tolerance for frustration, and insensitivity to interpersonal cues, which has the overall effect of decreasing altruistic behaviors (Kahn, 1997). Excessive arousal, or heightened stress response, could be relieved by natural settings which has

less complexity, intensity, and movement than urban environments leading to restorative influences (Evans, 2003; Kahn 1997; Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989). Positive affect could be enhanced by reducing the negative effect of stress, specifically a decrease in anger/aggression and fear. Depression can both contribute to and stem from an overactive stress response.

SRT

Stress reduction theory (SRT), put forth by evidence-based healthcare design researcher Ulrich (1984), focuses its framework more on evolutionary science. Suggesting the healing power of nature lies in an unconscious, autonomic response to natural elements that can occur without conscious recognition, this theory has been measured through testing physiological responses before and after exposure (Ulrich, 1993). According to this theory, specific natural landscapes (especially those along watersides and with visible horizons) are experienced as safe havens—areas in which our species tended to have greater rates of survival. The positive affective response that we feel in these spaces is due to this common evolutionary history. In other words, merely seeing or being present within nature can reduce stress through the automatic generation of physiological and psychological responses (Ewert & Chang, 2018; Ulrich, 1991, 1993). Longitudinal cross-cultural studies conducted extensive research administering in depth surveys across a broad global demographic population reflect our preference for features such as wide-open spaces, trees with high canopies, inclement weather, and bodies of water (Kahn, 1997; Kellert & Wilson, 1995; Ulrich, 1993).

Cross analyses of the data illustrated that cross culturally, people as a whole prefer the savannah like features of our ancestral homes (Kahn, 1997). In a landmark study by Ulrich (1984), some patients were provided with a view of greenery during postoperative recovery, the control group were not. Subjects with a view experienced positive emotional states and had more

favorable recovery, shorter postoperative hospital stays, reduction in post-surgical complications, fewer negative comments in nurses' notes, and fewer pain pills and analgesics compared to those with a view of a brick building.

Critiques

Theorists like Bone (2009) suggest biophilia is biologically deterministic and contradicts or ignores what we know of behaviorism and operant conditioning[2]. Critiques also suggest that this kind of determinism discounts the effects of culture on the psyche (Radmore, n.d.). One aspect of biophilia is that not only are we innately attracted to "life and life like organisms" (Wilson, 1984), but that we are also repelled by certain aspects of nature such as snakes; this is called biophobia (Ulrich, 1984). These fears have kept us safe evolutionarily speaking. Though there is some universal evidence to support this claim (Kellert, 1995, Ulrich, 1994), there is also evidence that people of differing cultures experience different levels of sensitivity and reactions to animals and the natural environment, implying a significant cultural effect on this variable (Noe & Snow, 1990).

Exposure to Nature and Reduced Depression

According to depression statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2010), about 9% of adult Americans have feelings of hopelessness, despondency, and/or guilt that generate a diagnosis of depression. In a study by Peacock et al. (2007), 71% of people found a reduction in depression after walking outdoors versus an indoor walk, which resulted in only 45% depression reduction. This study suggests that time in nature can be part of an effective treatment for depression.

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[2] Operant conditioning proposed by B. F. Skinner is a form of learning. Behavior is adapted due to consequences (results) of the behavior. That consequence may be reward (positive outcome) or punishment (negative outcome).

Bratman et al. (2015) also conducted an intriguing study hypothesizing that relative to urban experience, nature experience would decrease anxiety, rumination, and negative affect, and would increase positive affect. They also hypothesized that relative to urban experience, nature experience would increase verbal and visual working memory capacity and improve performance on the executive component of an attention test. In their study, there was an assumption that participants, all of whom resided in suburban or urban environments, entered the study with some degree of baseline directed attention depletion, and thus had the potential for a decrease in baseline levels of stress. Over the course of 15 months about 65 participants were assigned to nature or urban walks and exposed to a battery of tests including: State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI), Rumination-Reflection Questionnaire (RRQ), and Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS). To measure the cognitive impact of nature experience, they tested verbal working memory, visuospatial working memory, and executive attention through a variety of psychological measurements.

The forementioned studies demonstrate correlation and causation between time spent in nature and positive effects on mental and emotional health, illustrating the need for humans to have access to and spend significant time the natural environment. These studies show that just walking in nature can reduce depression and anxiety. Ecotherapy builds on this body of knowledge and further channels these restorative properties to incorporate a therapeutic approach.

History of Ecopsychology

In 1992, Theodore Roszak coined the term ecopsychology to describe the eco-based philosophy which had emerged from the synthesis of other earth centered ways of understanding man's psychological relations with the natural environment (Roszak, 1992). The roots of this

movement stem from the 1960s and 1970s and were a response to the prominent environmental degradation of the 1960s. This was a time marked by a general critical analysis of systems and structures that were hierarchical and oppressive which inspired social movements such as the civil rights movement, feminism, and the first earth day (Reser, 1995).

Radical (emerging, non-mainstream) perspectives rooted in the critical analysis of the human domination of nature and oppression of minorities were emerging. Professor emeritus Robert Greenway, who many consider the founding father of ecopsychology, was teaching what he called "psycho ecology" at Sonoma University in the 60s (Greenway, 1999; Schroll, 2007). Psycho ecology had roots in theories, such as ecofeminism, transpersonal ecology[3], and depth ecology[4], which rejected traditional Western paradigms.

The beginning of the critical analysis of pedagogy of environmental studies started with Greenway's classes in the late 1960s and continued in the 1990's Berkeley when one of Greenway's former students formed a group that discussed the relationship between the natural environment and pathology in the Western world (Schroll, 2007). This group led to the development of the field of ecopsychology to bridge the gap between ecology and psychology and included Theodore Roszak, Mary Gomes, Allen Kanner (interviewed for this dissertation), and Robert Greenway. The theorists from the Berkeley ecopsychology group saw a deficit in the environmental movement, meaning there was a lack of connection in addressing the ecological crisis without considering its psychological dimensions. "Mainstream psychology relegated anxieties, pathologies, and other forms of mental illness to the personal domain, rarely

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[3] Transpersonal meaning greater than person or beyond the ego, a merging with more than self. Ecology being the relationship of organisms to one another and to their physical surroundings, also the political movement that seeks to protect the environment, especially from pollution.
[4] Depth ecology is an environmental movement and philosophy that regards human life as just one of many equal components of a global ecosystem.

considering the effects of escalating planetary devastation or the benefits of direct contact with nature" (Friedman & Hartelius, 2015, p. 599). Theodore Roszak is most known for coining the phrase ecopsychology, which was simply a play on words from Greenway's less popular term "psycho ecology." Roszak's book, *Voice of The Earth*, brought the field mainstream attention and is considered by many to be the "bible" of ecopsychology and frequently used as a foundational text in universities (Roszak, 1992).

Ecological Unconscious

Roszak was passionate about getting the ideas of ecopsychology to be accepted by greater academia**.** He was envisioning, or revisioning, psychology within the context of the modern environment, which is cut off from nature. Roszak (1992) commented that the cause of many modern psychopathologies stem from the "collective alienation [which is] at the root of both the environmental crisis and individual neurosis" (p. 277). Since he viewed psychic isolation as a cause of depression, and feeling a part of something larger than one's self as an integral element of health, he introduced the concept of the ecological unconscious. Ecological unconscious builds on the Jungian collective unconscious to include a focus on our shared cosmic history and the importance of identification with all living things which fosters a self-identity beyond the individual. Roszak (1992b) wrote:

> Just as it has been the goal of previous therapies to recover the repressed contents of the unconscious, so the goal of ecopsychology is to awaken the inherent sense of environmental reciprocity that lies within the ecological unconscious. Other therapies seek to heal the alienation between person and person, person and family, person and society. Ecopsychology seeks to heal the more fundamental alienation between the person and the natural environment. (p. 320)

In ecopsychology, the ecological unconscious also includes what is known as eco-anxiety, which is a collective and often unconscious stress experienced by humans in reaction to both the mistreatment of the earth and our disconnection from nature. Roszak (1992a) goes on to explain,

"For ecopsychology, repression of the ecological unconscious is the deepest root of collusive madness in industrial society; open access to the ecological unconscious is the path to sanity" (p. 320). These themes of repression of troubling conscious material that gets acted out as symptoms of pathology draws on key tenants of Freudian psychoanalytic theory.

Grounding his theories in Freud served to situate/legitimize ecopsychology within the broader field of psychology. According to Metzner (2004), Roszak intended to rehabilitate or revise the Freudian concept of the id: instead of the "predatory, lecherous beast," he describes the id's potential as the "repository of ancient ecological wisdom." Metzner (2004) expands, "Here Roszak makes a powerful point: the practices and beliefs often derided as 'primitive' and 'superstitious' may in fact be as effective, if not superior, than our own, and certainly promote a greater degree of ecological sanity" (p. X).

Indigenous Knowledge

This introduces another popular tenant of EP, which is that we should look to indigenous cultures as possible guidance towards mental and emotional health. It can be generalized that during the pre-colonial era there was an animistic relationship between indigenous people and nature. Conceptualizing resources as sacred invites a reciprocal relationship and prevents overuse, depletion, and imbalance. Traditional Western construct is anthropocentric and views resources as inanimate, which has led to resource crises. Roszak (1992a) explains why this idea should be seen as a healthier alternative than our western construct:

> animism might be credited with a more sophisticated perception of physicality than we would have found in Western science … and (have) proven ecological utility: it disciplines the relationship of humans to their environment, imposing an ethical restraint upon exploitation and abuse. (p. 82)

Being a part of a living, or animistic world and system also guards against the feelings of alienation and lack of purpose so prevalent in our modern culture which is also acknowledged as the foundation of depression.

Dualism

Traditionally, Western culture conceptualizes the self as separate from the body and in turn separate from nature. This is known as mind body dualism, or "Cartesian Dualism" based on statement by French Enlightenment philosopher Rene Descartes, in his Discourse on Method (1637): Cogito ergo sum (Latin: "I think, therefore I am"). This claim placed man's intellect and thinking ability "reason" as not only separate but superior to the body and thus all of nature. Most ecopsychologists point to the fact that the brain does not exist without the body just as the human does not exist outside his environment, thus illuminating a fundamental error in the Western approach to both medicine and psychology which treats symptoms rather than holistic causes. Greenway pointed to this kind of dualistic thinking as "perhaps the source of our pervasive sense of being disconnected" from the natural world (p. 131) and suggested that such dualism (in contrast to nondual or unitive perspectives) is also at the root of Western culture's domination, exploitation, and destruction of human habitat, "the very basis of our survival as a species" (Doherty, 2010).

Ecofeminism

Ecofeminist, philosopher, and historian of science, Carolyn Merchant, reminds us that prior to Descartes and the age of enlightenment, nature was conceived of as the benevolent and maternal resource. During this time period, "conceptions of the Earth as nurturing bringer of life began slowly to change to one of a resource to be exploited" (Merchant, 1980, p. 170). With the

idea that man was the most rational and intelligent being, came an entitlement to despoil the earth and use its resources at will.

The ecofeminist movement highlighted the importance of addressing our impact on the environment as well recognizing the parallels between subordination of both nature and women. Ecofeminism emerged in the 1970s alongside the second wave of feminism and the green movement, these philosophies incorporated "a concern about the impact of human activities on the non-human world and from feminism the view of humanity as gendered in ways that subordinate, exploit and oppress women" (Mellor, 1997, p. 1).

Ecofeminism promotes that the contemporary eco-crises have resulted from a patriarchal culture that promotes the violence and destruction of the earth in pursuit of dominance and gain. Eco-feminist writer Gomes (Gomes & Kanner (1995), who was also part of the original Berkeley group writes, "A key insight of ecofeminism is the despoiling of the earth and the subjugation of women are intimately connected" (p. 112). Feminist therapist Sullivan (1990) illustrated this point: "The feminist approach does not seek to conquer nature or the world. Instead, it places value on interdependence above individualism" (p. 19). Masculine attributes of independence and disconnection are valued in our culture. We promote rugged individualism rather than interdependence. Roszak et al. (1995) wrote, "Domination becomes a way to deny dependence a dependence that has been culturally defined as a failure and a humiliation rather than as a natural and inevitable part of life" (p. 115).

Ecopsychology incorporates this feminist perspective that the relationship between humans and nature should be characterized by seamless interconnection rather than dominance. Greenway (as cited in Doherty, 2010) speaks of time in wilderness as encompassing the healing elements of this feminist unitive perspective, "I see the grip of the mental 'dualistic habit' still

tightly wrapped around the Western mind and I know, from former students, that immersion in the wilderness loosens that grip."

An expanded narrative had emerged from feminism: the personal domain had expanded to the political, as illustrated in the slogan "What's personal is political." These schools of thoughts influenced the field of psychology. Feminist therapists place the intersection of the client's gender, race, and socioeconomic status on equal levels of importance with family history and childhood upbringing. Ecopsychology broadens the psychological lens to include not only family, community, racial and cultural influences but also the relationship with the natural environment and geo-political influences.

A Divide in the Field Ecopsychology

Within the field of ecopsychology there is debate around how much to challenge the field of psychology and our larger consumer/capitalist lifestyle. The first editor of the Ecopsychology journal, Thomas Doherty, labeled the different approaches in the field "first generation and second generation thinking" (Doherty, 2009). He claims that the first generation believes a cultural overhaul is necessary, while the second generation is more focused on mainstreaming the therapeutic aspect through empirical data to lend credibility and provide more access to eco-therapeutic treatment.

Founding theorists (such as Greenway) assert that ecopsychology should not become another academic discipline because in doing so it would have to align with a scientific standard of knowing that reflects the dualism which is philosophically at odds with the nondual and unitive perspectives of ecopsychology. In an interview with Smith (2010), Greenway comments on this divide within the field and why it is difficult to shift to an empirically based focus by

stating: “the field hasn’t just sidestepped science; it has denigrated it [scientific thinking] as a system of inquiry that objectifies the natural world” (p. 36).

Fisher (2013) defines ecopsychology as a radical political, economic, and social movement which suggests an overhaul of cultural values which would combat the extreme destructive influence of capitalism on both the human psyche and the health of the planet. Fisher describes his first book, *Radical Ecopsychology*, as “an attempt to help the field get on some radical scholarly footings” (p.2). Fisher (2013) cites first generation contributors such as Shepard (1982), Roszak (1992a), and Clinebell (1996) as proponents of a more radical approach to the philosophy. He argues that the second generation of ecotherapy is mainstreaming ecopsychology too much. Fisher (2013) suggests that to mainstream ecopsychology is to add to the problem because he calls for a radical change in how we interact with nature. To prescribe an eco-therapeutic intervention, such as gardening in the client’s backyard, would be ignoring the larger scale neglect of and violence towards the planet and perhaps even leading to further exploitation. First wave ecopsychologists call for placing the earth and connection to nature at the center of public policy (Fisher, 2013). In 2009, however, a “second generation” ecopsychology was proposed that came to do the exact opposite, explicitly depoliticizing the field in order to make it more attractive to mainstream psychologists (Fisher, 2012).

Prominent second-generation thinkers, such as Kahn and Hasbach (2012), feel its therapeutic potential is more important than its idealistic roots. Kahn (2013), Editor in Chief of the journal *Ecopsychology*, clearly stated the need for incorporating science and technology through quantitative studies and gathering a greater sphere of empirical data to garnish acceptance and larger utilization of this therapy. Kahn and Hasbach (2012) arguably seek to distance ecopsychology from this radical ecology, inferring that the former’s counter culturalism

now works against it. The second generation are proponents of ecotherapy who claim to offer a remedy for anxiety and depression and to reduce symptoms of attention fatigue and ADHD caused by what they call a "nature deficit." These therapists want to bring the application of eco-psychological ideas and philosophy into therapy rooms as well as schools, hospitals, and jails. Distancing themselves from the original extremist roots of the philosophy could allow greater access to this approach. Hasbach illustrates this point when she argues that "it is time for the clinical fields to recognize that ecotherapy can and should stand alongside the other foremost therapies that allow for the unfolding and flourishing of human lives" (Kahn & Hasbach, 2012, p. 14).

Third Generation

Fisher calls for what I argue could be conceived of as a "third" generation EP. This stance incorporates the prevailing notions of both first- and second-generation approaches. In his writing, Fisher (2012) sought to alter the thinking that "radicalism implies dangerous extremism. To the contrary, I aim to highlight the irrationality in the status quo, in our received modes of thought and practice, and thus to present the radical view as deeply sensible and essentially human" (p. 80). Part of the challenge for ecopsychologists is to flip our thinking and recognize that what is typically conceived of as radical is actually necessary and sane. Incorporating more second generation thinking, Fisher (2012) also points out the complexity of the field, hoping to dispel the notion "that ecopsychology is an intellectual lightweight or merely therapeutic form of psychology. Again, I argue the opposite—that it demands the highest degree of scholarly sophistication" (p. 80), thus he also promotes research and second generational thinking as a way to further establish the field.

Fisher (2013) clearly emphasizes that dualism is the root of epistemological suffering and also creates the "ignorance" that allows the destruction of our habitat and stands behind an EP that can lead us out of a pathologized mindset. This vision of EP requires inclusion of both scholarly research and cultural paradigm shift. Fisher calls for the need to be honest with the urgency of our situation, asks ecopsychologists to begin to resolve the fissure in the field by not shying away from words like "radical" and "revolution."

Moving Forward

EP has criticized psychology for not recognizing our interconnectedness with nature. There has been some progress in this area with the APA recognizing the climate crises, but as an institution, the APA has far to come to address the connection between the natural environment and human health. "Psychology, so dedicated to awakening human consciousness, needs to wake itself up to one of the most ancient human truths: we cannot be studied or cured apart from the planet" (Hillman, 1995, pp. xvii–xxiii).

EP as a field aligns with ecofeminists and other radical ecology movements. Radical ecopsychology is both personal and political and can be used as a platform to encourage psychologists to become political. Roszak (1992b) concluded ecopsychology's:

> goal is to bridge our culture's long-standing, historical gulf between the psychological and ecological, to see the needs of the planet and the person as continuum . . . to span the gap between the personal and planetary in a way that suggests political alternatives. (p. 9)

Traditionally psychologists have taken a neutral stance, stepping back from much of public policy especially that around the environment and economics, but EP asserts that the time has come for psychology to address not only the effect of environmental degradation on humans but the how and why our culture must not allow this to go on.

The purpose of this review has been to introduce readers to the historical philosophy behind ecopsychology as well as the practical application of ecotherapy to highlight the

importance of incorporating the core tenants of EP into mainstream psychology. The literature suggests that psychologists from all backgrounds and approaches might consider a wider lens in their definition of "environment" to include our relationship with the natural world. The eco-psychological perspective views mental illness as going hand in hand with the debilitated state of global ecosystems and advocates for an improved relationship with nature which may lead to environmental awareness and policy change.

There are divisions and concerns within the fields of ecopsychology and ecotherapy about how to have the greatest impact in eliciting change in clients and society. Ecopsychology is a dynamic and emerging field (Greenway, 2000). This project involves interviewing experts (who are also the founders) who can comment on how the field has evolved which is valuable in understanding ecopsychology's impact on mainstream psychology. This study explores the research questions: (a) How is ecopsychology defined by experts in the field? (b) Should all psychologists be trained in ecopsychology? (c) How is ecopsychology used in case conceptualization? (d) What has kept or is keeping EP from becoming more "mainstreamed"? (e) What can be done to allow greater accessibility to the field of ecopsychology and ecotherapy?

In recruiting participants, I attempted to balance schools of thought by including prominent scholars who can be considered first generation and second-generation thinkers. Participants ranged from original founding members of the field who have been publishing within academia to self-educated participants who solely focus on living and teaching the embodied tenants of ecopsychology. It was important to include a participant who was outside the traditional field of academia to present data in the form of commentary that validates the first-generation thinkers concerns about the vital message of ecopsychology (which is potentially earth saving) being inaccessible to those who have not pursued graduate education because it is

largely written about in academic journals. This interview data attempts to facilitate a greater understanding of ecopsychology including its strengths, limitations, and place within the larger field of psychology.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODS

The following section describes the qualitative methodology used to conduct this project. The research design was based on a constructionist perspective (Andrews, 2012) achieved through interviewing experts in the field of ecopsychology. The notion of "experts" in research methodology refers to persons responsible for development, implementation, or control of solutions, strategies, or policies. Experts usually have privileged access to information about groups of people or decision processes and have a high level of aggregated and specific knowledge that is otherwise difficult to access (Littig, 2013). Researchers Meuser and Nagel (1991, as cited in Bogner et al., 2009) recommended using expert interviews as data gathering technique in research fields that are less established. Ecopsychology fits this category as a "new" theoretical approach to healing within the discipline of psychology. Because the field of ecopsychology is new, and there are divisions and concerns within the field, interviewing experts (who are also the founders) and can comment on how the field has evolved is valuable in understanding ecopsychology's impact on mainstream psychology. This study used semi-structured expert interviews.

Bogner et al. (2009) identify three different types of expert interview: exploratory, systematizing, and theory generating, each intended for a different purpose. This paper primarily used the exploratory expert interview to facilitate a deeper understanding of how EP is situated within the larger field of psychology and also to highlight how restoring the human nature relationship is necessary for greater psychological wellbeing (which is critical given the climate crises). The following research questions guided the interviews: (a) How is ecopsychology defined by experts in the field? (b) Should all psychologists be trained in ecopsychology? (c) How is ecopsychology used in case conceptualization? (d) What has kept or is keeping EP from

becoming more “mainstreamed”? and (e) What can be done to allow greater accessibility to the field of ecopsychology and ecotherapy?

Rationale for a Phenomenological Methodology

The qualitative approach rests on the idea that one can extrapolate knowledge by studying the subjective experiences of others and that there are multiple truths as opposed to one universal truth (Creswell, 2003). Phenomenological methods and ecopsychology share a focus on human experience and resist reductionistic approaches to science.

> Hermeneutics, for its part, is the art and science of interpretation and thus also of meaning. Meaning in this context is not a thing that is final and stable, but something that is continuously open to new insight and interpretation. (Friesen, N., Henriksson, C., & Saevi, 2012, p. 1)

This research project focuses on interviewees’ experiences and knowledge which are also interpretations.

> The hermeneutic interview has a conversational structure: it is oriented to sense-making and interpreting experiential meanings. . . In other words, both the interviewer and the interviewee attempt to interpret the significance of the preliminary themes in the light of the original phenomenological question. (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2014, p. 12)

In my data analyses I examined both differences and consensus in the experts’ views of the field of EP.

Edmund Husserl, considered the father of phenomenology, was interested in the acquisition and utilization of knowledge, and felt the most important aspect of one’s experience is consciousness about the manner in which the experience is engaged (Craig, 2003; Palmer, 1969). This mirrors ecopsychology as it is experientially based and has evolved from transcendental philosophies (which presents an idealistic merging with nature). Though in recent years ecopsychology has sought to legitimize itself by collecting and publishing empirically based research studies, its philosophical origins reject the objectified reductionism of hard

science. Meaning making is at the heart of many therapeutic approaches including ecopsychology.

Sampling and Selection

Denzin (1994) points out that a good informant is someone with the requisite knowledge and experience desired for the study and is also someone with the ability to reflect in an articulate manner. This study will employ purposeful sampling, also known as critical case sampling (Mertens, 2014). According to Patton (2001), this approach is frequently employed in qualitative research design and yields in-depth information about the chosen phenomenon.

In selecting participants there was a focus on including a diverse sample of ecopsychologists to capture the characteristics and predominant qualities of the field. Participants were selected based on their writing and or teaching of the subject of ecopsychology. Efforts were made to get diverse viewpoints representing both "generations" of ecopsychological thinking. Criteria for inclusion was clinicians operating under the title "ecopsychologists," holding either a PsyD or a PhD title, or other expert status including teachers and authors, English speaking, and 20 years or older.

A uniform email (Appendix A) was sent to 12 potential participants to inquire about their willingness to take part in this study. A brief description of the study was attached (Appendix B). Approximately two weeks after the emails were sent, each potential subject was called to discuss how the interviews would be structured and the aim of the study. When the potential subject agreed to participate, they were asked to sign a consent form (Appendix C). The subject then picked a date and time that worked for them and an appointment for a skype interview was established.

It was anticipated that the response rate would be high because of a shared common background which can increase the level of motivation on the part of the expert to participate in an interview (Littig, 2013). Interviews included five male participants, four of which met the criteria for holding a PsyD or PhD title, and one participant representing the more radical branch of ecopsychology who is self-educated and "nature" educated. Four female participants were included, three of them holding doctorate titles and one a published author and teacher.

Interview Method

Interviews took place over phone and / or Skype and were loosely based on 14 questions (See Appendix B) that were intended to guide the interview. During the interviews, I used Kvale's (1996) framework for condensing and interpreting the meaning of what the participants describe and reflecting it back to the participants to give them an opportunity to confirm or disconfirm with corrections.

The second part of Kvale's (1996) two-part procedural framework for the interview data analysis is consistent with the philosophical stance of qualitative phenomenological research. Data was reviewed and analyzed first through the transcribing verbatim. Using the central research questions as a guide, I ascertained, highlighted, and categorized the natural meaning units (NMUs) of each participant of this study. A natural meaning unit is a condensed summation of meaning relevant to the research topic taken from passages from the interview. A list of NMUs was formulated and compiled on each participant and catalogued by themes. A cross-case analysis was conducted in order to identify any shared themes among the participants.

Recording

Participants' interviews were recorded in three ways to ensure reliability of material.

- Researcher recorded interview on Skype platform (with the exception of two interviews where participants were unable to Skype).
- Researcher used her phone as an audio recording device.
- Researcher ran a transcribing application off of Microsoft Word during interview as third method to retain interview data.

Ethics and Informed Consent

The researcher anticipated the manner by which this study could potentially harm its human participants. The main domain of risk was identified through the process of informed consent and the clarification of the absence of confidentiality. The participants were volunteers and agreed to allow their identities to be used to further enrich the pedagogy of ecopsychology.

Informed consent was obtained from each participant during initial contact which clearly articulated the terms of participation in this study. A written Informed Consent document was provided using clear language that delineated the limits of confidentiality, the risks inherent in participation, the manner in which individuals' personal information was securely handled and stored, and the objectives of this research (Appendix C).

Efforts to Maintain Research Quality

Quality Control

I addressed the issues related to quality standards for qualitative research throughout the data collection and analysis processes. Issues of reliability and validity are also addressed through the strategic application of data comparison, which included the use of multiple data collection sources in the form of reviewing the literature and interviewing multiple experts. Mertens (2014) suggests the following categories to maintain research quality: Credibility, Transferability, Dependability, Confirmability, and Transformative Criteria.

Credibility. As suggested by Mertens (2014), engaging in "prolonged and persistent research in the field" (p. 330) creates credibility. I achieved this by conducting an in-depth literature review and enrolling in an on-line interactive course for Ecopsychology at Pacifica University, which was taught by three experts in the field; Buzzell, Chalquist, and Fisher. Triangulation was achieved because the course leaders held different areas of expertise and conflicting views. I was writing extensively and having my ideas reviewed by the professors and the other members in the class, which represented a globally divers group of students. My expert reader for this project, Chalquist, is an author and founder in the field of ecopsychology, which ensures accurate representation of the field. Additionally, I became a member of various ecopsychology groups on social media which allowed for a constant engagement with other members of the field which was helpful in keeping current with the topics and developments in the field.

Transferability. Transferability is the idea that the reader can assess within the context of what the experts are speaking about is relevant to them. "The researcher's responsibility is to provide sufficient detail to enable the reader to make such a judgment" (Mertens, 2014, p. 333). In this project, the interview data reflects the history, culture, and potential of the field as experienced by and reported on by the experts interviewed. The readers of this material are provided with context about the experts (i.e., whether they are first generation or second generation) and multiple interpretations of the data from them and thus can decide which aspects of the data is relevant to the reader.

Dependability. Dependability refers to the consistency and reliability of the research findings as well as the degree to which research procedures are documented. Qualitative research is dependable if someone outside the research project is able to understand, fact check, and

critique the research process (Polit et al., 2006; Sandelowski, 1986; Streubert, 2007). The data in this project will prove consistent when compared with the participants previously written work on the subject. The researcher was interested in evolution and growth in opinions of the participants within the dynamic context of the field, however, the main tenants of the field as discussed by experts remain unchanged. Thus, their expert opinions and input about various aspects of the field will remain historically valid.

Confirmability. Confirmability is the degree to which research data can be confirmed by other researchers as factual and not made up or conflated. To achieve this, multiple documentation methods of interview data were used including voice recording of the raw data and a transcribing application which printed the words verbatim. For the analyses, I used an online coding program called MAXQDA, which is available for audit by expert readers, and has documented the process which I arrived at various themes and coding which I then interpreted for my results.

Transformative Criteria. According to Mertens (2003):

> Transformative . . . scholars recommend the adoption of an explicit goal for research to serve the ends of creating a more just and democratic society that permeates the entire research process, from the problem formulation to the drawing of conclusions and the use of results. (p. 159)

In specifying transformative criteria, Mertens was interested in how authors introduced the transformative view into a research study through the use of a research problem that had relevance to a marginalized community, and also how the research results are intended to transform some aspect of the lives of some oppressed minority. Key issues of the community, such as diversity and oppression are explored.

This transformative framework is innately imbibed in ecopsychological philosophies. A large component of the philosophy of ecopsychology is ecojustice. Ecojustice incorporates

examining systemic oppression and exploitation of minoritized people in relation to the natural environment and "eco rights." I am using this term to describe the inalienable rights people should have to clean air and water and access to nature. Minoritized people in America have less access to nature and wilderness (Kanner, 2001), ecopsychology looks at the psychological effects on these groups from this restriction. Ecojustice also describes giving voice and privilege to native and tribal people about their homelands. Fundamental "rights" of nature such as trees and rivers to exist and have innate value outside their usefulness to humans is also under the ecojustice umbrella (Collins & Esterling, 2019).

Limitations

Limitations of the present study conditions beyond the control of the researcher which may have effect on the outcome of the study included the following items.

- Not enough female voices. There are only three out of nine female voices.
- The study is Eurocentric. Since this research design focused on experts in the field, and expert is largely defined as having published work in the field, certain voices are not included.
- Participants were interviewed on Skype or phone versus in person which possibly effected the poignancy of felt experience between participant and researcher thus effecting the depth of interviews.

Researchers Assumptions and Bias

Because I have successfully worked with clients using an ecopsychological lens and ecotherapeutic techniques, I have assumptions and biases that this is an effective therapeutic method of healing and that the field has much to offer to the greater psychological community. I worked to remain aware of where my predisposition possibly was influencing my interpretations.

It is imperative to the integrity of this research that personal biases and pre-formulated hypotheses were examined and set aside, judgment suspended, and constant vigilance maintained against forcing data outcomes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Qualitative analyses rests in part on the dependence upon the researchers' subjectivity. In this case, pre-knowledge may have affected my interpretation of participants' interviews. I attempted to minimize this distortion by remaining actively engaged in the community which offers differing views on the purpose and future of the field. I intentionally selected participants with opposing perspectives to actively reflect the diversity in the field.

The definition of phenomenological investigations requires us to look at the experience of the participant in all its subjectivity. Assurances of neutrality must be practiced. The first being that a complete record of the identifications of themes through coding is kept, so that the researcher's processes can be critically reviewed. The second assurance, and most important, is that the attitude of the researcher is one of intersubjectivity. This means that the psychological attitude of the researcher is constant vigilance to data as presented free of personal biases. The researcher must remain aware of the fact that the data will be reviewed the processes by which information and meaning is deduced can be scrutinized by a critical other. These are principles to guide an objective outcome, not guarantees of objectivity.

Based on the literature and personal lived experience, this research was being conducted under the following assumptions:

- to find meaning evokes healing, time in nature inspires one with a sense of meaning,
- the ecological crisis is real, meaning our natural resources are under threat of extinction,

- knowledge of this crises consciously or unconsciously has negatively impacted mental health,
- people are being negatively affected by their disconnection from nature and,
- an honest evaluation of one's role in protecting natural resources for future generations is necessary to ease "Eco angst," which is the conscious or unconscious feelings of anxiety resulting from the ecological crises.

Results

In this section I will present the results as organized by the interview questions (see Appendix A) and themes.

Divide in the Field

As discussed in the literature review, EP has yet to become a unified field. This research reaffirms there still is a philosophical differing among its members that is often described as the generational divide and reveals tension that still exists.

Participants were asked the following interview question: "Can you describe the divide in the field between first and second generation and walk me though why you fall on one side or another?" In some cases, I introduced two probes when participants did not spontaneously speak about these issues: (a) How do you respond to the criticism/ idea that mainstreaming EP will cause it to become co-opted and less potent, and (b) How do you respond to the idea that if we don't mainstream EP, we're withholding the elixir?

First Generation

First generation participants' responses focused on action results, which is consistent with a strong sense that the primary purpose of ecopsychology is to work towards systemic change,

critique organized academia, call for a paradigm shift, and recognize nature as an elixir and teacher.

Themes. These themes appeared in all four of the first-generation participants responses:

- The field should remain radical and counter cultural. Mainstreaming the field would threaten its potency.
- A critical view of the field of psychology (within academia and professional organizations such as the APA) as a corporate tool/ power structure.
- The belief that capitalism is harmful to the earth and human psyche.
- A critical view of academia's utility; specifically, that the writings and philosophies become lost in journals and higher educational classrooms that are largely inaccessible to the public.
- The necessity of seeking in nature the ultimate source of knowledge and human healing.
- The belief and corresponding sense that there is an urgency and limited time to address the climate crises and that radical praxis (as defined by Andy Fisher, 2012) is necessary.

Participant Summaries. All of the participants reflected upon the above themes in their interviews. The following are examples of particularly illustrative expressions of these themes from three of the four individual participants' responses I have categorized as first generation.

Themes. The field should remain radical and counter cultural. Mainstreaming the field would threaten its potency. Kanner highlighted how many in the Berkley group who founded EP already had their PhDs:

> That if ecopsychology just becomes another field like social psychology or clinical … it wouldn't challenge these very large structures and systems and ways of thinking … it wouldn't be successful in facilitating the kinds of changes that we thought it needed.

Kanner explained that when the journal of *Ecopsychology* was first published, there was hope it would broaden the accessibility of the field and move away from the radical label. But Kanner's reaction to that was skepticism: mainstreaming would mean depoliticizing the field and participating in a "broken" system.

Themes. A critical view of the field of psychology (within academia and professional organizations such as the APA) as a corporate tool/ power structure. Pilisuk is first generational because he is vocal about identifying and critiquing powerful structures, including the structure of the association that governs the field of psychology known as the American Psychological Association (APA). In his interview, Pilisuk describes the "dirty dealings" of the APA, illustrating that the organization has acted unethically at times. He cites the Hoffman Report which found the APA culpable in covering for the contracts that psychologists were making in the military and allowing psychologists to participate in coercive interrogation: "This reflects the fact that APA is part of a larger system of which it seeks obsessional control, and it is not going to rock its major financial sources." This statement shows his skepticism that EP will be accepted because of the control the APA holds. Pilisuk also stresses the importance of emotional connection to nature rather than the cerebral academic view.

> For some time ecopsychology was an attempt by psychologists to relate their work to ecological concerns, it was largely a movement that went from one academic paper to another usually involved white middle-class people and it introduced a message that is still yet to be fulfilled, the idea that environmental problems can be solved technically.

Themes. The belief that capitalism is harmful to the earth and human psyche. All of the participants responses echo the foundational idea of Roszak's first tenants that the personal is planetary. Ecopsychologists believe that reciprocal relationships with nature foster a healthier

psychological mindset and detract from habitual narcissistic thinking which capitalism promotes. First generation participants were more vocal about naming capitalism as creating a consumer mindset that acts as if natural resources are infinite. Lion highlights the links between corporate greed, capitalism, and environmental crises. He explains how agriculture has changed to monoculture and how corporations use "systematic propaganda" to weaken cultural values and "instill a new one which enslaves" people and "strips them of their identity [and] turns them into machines—that's colonialism. Capitalism cannot thrive without colonial plantations." Lion emphasizes how Americans materialistic and consumeristic lifestyle comes at the cost of workers dignity and the environment.

Themes. A critical view of academia's utility; specifically, that the writings and philosophies become lost in journals and higher educational classrooms that are largely inaccessible to the public. Kanner, first generation, expressed the need for more direct action to promote the ideas and philosophies of ecopsychology. "Beyond the journal too, we would need to be saying, okay how do we get this out into the world more effectively with what we know?" Kanner rejects the idea that empirical evidence (second generation thinking) should be a central focus in the field. He is also emphatic about the urgency to act:

> Another study showing that nature is healing? I don't know how many more of those we need, you know what I mean? So I don't know if that's the best emphasis, I don't want to dictate to people what they should or should not research or what kind of clinical work they want to do but I want them to be thinking about these bigger questions and we are running out of time so there is a kind of urgency to it all.

Themes. The belief and corresponding sense that there is an urgency and limited time to address the climate crises and that radical praxis (as defined by Andy Fisher, 2012) is necessary. Kanner emphasizes that "it takes some courage to challenge these bigger systems." Since these bigger systems are, according to Kanner, inherently toxic, incremental changes from within the

system are ineffectual because they don't address the fundamental issues of capitalism and colonialism which are embedded within academic institutions. Instead of solely publishing scholarly articles, he calls for:

> hav[ing] a strategy around taking your results and bringing them out into the world in the most effective way possible … as opposed to just getting a publication in a journal, that you know 72–80 people might read. And that would entail things like contacting activist groups and saying I have this how can this help? Contacting the media and trying to get coverage (which is not what you're supposed to do as an academic) … so that you are actually taking the knowledge and using the authority that you have gotten because you're a researcher, and you have results, and you have a publication, and then taking it as far as you can … in terms of trying to make it more impactful. And not just to convince your colleagues to reference you which is usually a criteria by which academic success is measured.

Themes. The necessity of seeking in nature the ultimate source of knowledge and human healing. John Scull would be considered first generation because his emphasis is not on academia or gathering empirical knowledge, but rather getting out in nature and letting nature itself be the "elixir." He explains:

> That is what we need to learn from our contact with nature, we need to let it change us and change our culture and so taking a psychological theory like psychoanalysis, Gestalt psychology, or trans-personal psychology … and applying that to nature is just immediately missing the point. The point is to let … understanding flow in the other direction, not to take our theories and map [them] onto the natural world ... as long as people are indoors talking about it nothing's going to happen.

Second Generation

These participants' responses reflected a shift towards more academic involvement and wanting to make changes from within the system that would "green" psychology. They take a more measured approach, striving for small changes within the system instead of a call for a paradigm shift. These participants conceptualize EP as the philosophical origins behind ecotherapy and a medium for helping society to utilize nature in a range of professional settings such as hospitals, schools, and prisons to facilitate greater wellbeing. Additionally, these participants place an emphasis on empirical evidence and want to move away from what is

perceived as stigma against first generational thinking as being overly idealistic and not organized enough to create change.

Themes. These themes appeared in second generation participants answers:

- The belief that the counter-culture origins reflect poorly on the field and keep it marginalized.
- The importance of academia and empirical evidence to legitimize the field and provide greater access to it.
- An emphasis on ecotherapy as a healing method that can be applied without recognizing the philosophical origins of ecopsychology.

Participant Summaries. The following are examples from the interviews of Thomas Doherty and Patricia Hasbach, whose statements strongly reflect second generational thinking. Doherty believes it is better to legitimize the field by showing strong research and empirical evidence to support effective eco therapy. Further, Doherty believes it is ineffective to challenge the structures as the field will continue to be relegated to a counter-culture idealist philosophy and it is more effective to make small changes from within the system: “Because of its grassroots origins the field had a hard time getting a foot in academia, second generation helped to legitimize the field in academia’s eyes.” Doherty views overtly challenging the system as problematic because it keeps this field on the fray and viewed as counterculture.

Doherty expressed the belief that the radical philosophical origins of the field and resistance of some of the founders to science and academia stopped the field from growing into a movement. “I mean at any level, if you want to influence a school board or your town council or your city or whatever organization you know, there are certain ways to do that, (laughs) you

know and um part of that is having a very clear argument and being very systematic." Doherty sees the second generation as the grounding force that the field needs to progress.

Hasbach identifies as second generation because of her position that the field needs "greater scholarship and stronger scientific research" in order for it to be taken more seriously. She sees value in utilizing the field as a way to provide health and healing to more people. Here she expresses hope for the future of the field because it has moved away from its counterculture stigma with legitimate studies proving its efficacy.

> I think there is a lot more crossover where ecopsychology was still looked at as this woo-woo fringy field where true researchers don't want to tread. In fact, we're seeing just a lot of work from using empirical data around treatment of depression and treatment of anxiety and some of those treatments being based on ecopsychology theory and biophilia and those kinds of theoretical bases. So, I think there has been tremendous growth.

Hasbach acknowledges EP's roll in validating qualitative as opposed to quantitative research but also suggests qualitative research and data can and should be further legitimized.

Straddlers

Two participants consider themselves "straddlers," meaning they view themselves to be on both sides of the philosophical divide.

Themes.

- The belief that the counterculture philosophical origins are necessary wisdom for the field moving forward.
- The perspective that systemic and structural change can be created from accumulative changes within the "broken" system.

Participant Summaries. William Hafford expresses why he "straddles" between first and second generations. He conceptualizes first generational thinking as the more passionate approach and second generational as more logical.

> I think I straddle in part because here I am in an academic capacity … I see the need to formalize and green psychology … and then I can totally see Andy Fisher's point of radical ecopsychology and the need for that. He has my heart, and my brain kind of says like well at the same time we need to increase our reach and it's got to be through these kind of formal channels and we need to infect this larger organization and get them moving in that direction. So, you know that's a tough one … we can go down the river in two canoes for a little while and hopefully meet up.

Hafford expresses hope that both approaches can meld at some point.

Linda Buzzell also straddles both sides of the generational line. She passionately reveres the indigenous roots of the philosophies around EP and credits her own garden with providing "a transformational experience" for her. Thus, she views nature as an elixir and conducts therapy outdoors. Buzzell expresses first generational radical thinking:

> Do we really want ecopsychology to be one more psychology? Do you really want ecotherapy to be one more therapy or is it a revolutionary thing? It's actually … a total paradigm shift and that's what people … within ecopsychology are asking for. It's not enough just to include good therapeutic methods within some mainstream psychology or medical treatment … and especially because of the eco crisis.

Yet she is also deeply rooted in the academic world, and it could be argued that her books have put ecotherapy on the map, thus mainstreaming the practice of ecotherapy. Buzzell expresses second generation support in connection with the usefulness of gathering empirical evidence:

> I do think that [the efficacy of ecotherapy is] beginning to be accepted and I think the rapid growth of ecotherapy is because of those studies so I'm all in favor of them. I mean some of their research on the effects of nature connection on various conditions is mind-boggling. And I think unless the research results had been that robust, I don't think people would have felt confident. I mean the reason why medical doctors are now doing nature research is because we produced these studies [with positive effects on mental and physical health that we don't see from] many, many other things including medication. It's just unequivocal; I mean the studies that were done from 2005 to 2006 in the UK at the University of Essex that showed that a walk in green nature was as effective as antidepressants for mild to moderate depression was a mind blower.

Multiple Interpretations of Ecopsychology

There are multiple interpretations of ecopsychology in the literature. Many agree that its very definition is flexible with permeable boundaries that resist concrete definition. From a

phenomenological viewpoint, I am interested in getting the perspectives of the experts of their evolving definition of what is important and perhaps core to EP at the time of this interview. The participants were asked the following interview questions: What is your personal definition of ecopsychology? What are the key tenets in your definition?

All of the participants agreed EP is a philosophical frame that places emotional and psychological wellbeing of humans as inextricably related to the health of the planet. Buzzell references the root meaning of the word to orient her definition.

> If you take the word ecopsychology and break it down there's a lot in there. Eco is a Greek word for home, psyche is pretty self-evident, and then Logos which you could interpret as the study of, so if you put those together I think it does come up with some sort of, the study of this relationship between the human psyche and nature our home. So I think you can dig really deeply into that word and get a lot of interesting stuff.

Buzzell's response was the only one that referenced the literal definition of the word, but I think she sums up nicely the consensus of the rest of the participants.

All of the participants echoed one of Roszak's tenants of the field describing the need to interact with the environment in a way that preserves it. Kanner expresses this when he advocates for "a return to a more reciprocal way of living with the world around us, that at the end of the day … we can continue living in this environment."

All of the participants agreed that there is an element of environmental activism[5] associated with the philosophy that should be enacted. They differ in their approach, however; about half expressed the belief that the hands-on activism with the environment as well as political activism[6], is the most important element of ecopsychology. Scull emphasizes the

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[5] Based on the definition of "environmental activism" that appears on TheFreeDictionary.com, one can define an environmental activist as a person who advocates for, or works towards, protecting the natural environment from destruction or pollution.

[6] For the purpose of this paper, I am describing two kinds of activists one is hands on, meaning being physically involved with nature, restoring habitats or protecting natural sites with a

importance of involving youth in this hands-on approach and "forgetting" about theory and philosophy.

> I reckon that might be where ecopsychology could really have an influence, forgetting about Young and Hellman and those people and just take a bunch of kids out and help them repair the natural world. I do a lot on the land trust movement we do a lot of planting trees and clearing invasive plants and restoring streams. To me that's what ecopsychology is about, do that mindfully and thoughtfully.

Lesley Davenport and Buzzell emphasized EP as a platform to treat climate change victims or climate refugees. Davenport (2017) nicely summarizes why she wrote her book in which the title indicates her intent, *Emotional Resilience in the Era of Climate Change*.

> Looking at health and healing from multiple perspectives with each discipline having a valid voice, … what if we bring that over to the climate change arena? Yes, we need the engineers. Yes, we need the science, but psychology has not been at the table very much and yet we have so much to offer. I came up with a book about how to work with denial, how to change habits [because] even when someone wants to get on board it's hard to do.

This quote illustrates Davenport's interpretation of ecopsychology as a platform for helping with behavioral change that would lead to hands on activism.

Four of the participants were more politically oriented and had a more radical philosophy that holds responsible large cultural structures such as capitalism as the root of the climate crises and western cultures growing pathologies. Buzzell describes how our capitalist system has "brainwashed" us into accepting an ecocidal culture as "normal." She explains:

> Once you really understand that you are part and parcel of industrial culture … I mean we've all been brainwashed into it … it's very hard to see through all of it … It's actually an abomination and how a lot of indigenous cultures were living was normal and we're living in this incredibly unnormal situation. I mean we're destroying [the earth] … suicidal, matriarchal, ecocidal, that's our culture. That's pretty weird; if we had been like this all through the history of humanity we wouldn't be here.

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physical presence. Political activism involves attending protests, writing letters, spreading information.

Historically EP created a platform for critiquing the field of psychology, which is also viewed by first generation thinkers as a powerful structure that should be questioned and monitored. More than half of the participants consider this as continuing to be an important central tenant, as is reflected in the following quote by Pilisuk as he calls attention to the corporate aspect of psychology and why as an organization it does not always function with the health of humans as a first concern.

> Psychology is a well-organized and large corporate professional endeavor and to the extent that it can do things that regard racial equality or environmental concerns without Rocking the Boat they are happy to do that. They get good publicity for doing that. Where it starts to affect their bottom line as an organization, they're much more reluctant.

Hafford also challenges the field by directly questioning how we interpret mental health issues such as anxiety and depression and what we consider the role of the psychologist in the context of capitalism and the climate crises.

> Take heart in the words of Clarence Darrow, "we should comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable" because I think it's totally true and I often think it's true for us as psychologists. It's like what is our role? To help people get over their depression and anxiety so that they can become better consumers and define the structure that ends our species? Or is our role to uncover and examine the underpinnings? Maybe depression and anxiety are a normal response to destructive human patterns of living. Are there other frames that we can be pursuing? I think that is a hopeful piece for us, maybe a role in afflicting the comfortable. And honestly, as a field we have been very comfortable for a long time. I'm happy that there is some discomfort.

The participants who represent first generation thinking also take issue with the apolitical stance traditionally taken by academics in the field of psychology. These participants believe that because mental, emotional, and environmental health are affected by political legislation, psychologists should not have a neutral stance in these matters, but rather speak to evidence of what humans need to prosper and thrive. As ecopsychologists, this includes issues around environmental justice.

In contrast Doherty was the only participant who advises against publicly critiquing the field as he believes that is not the most effective way forward.

> I don't insult the community; I don't tell them that their damaged, their broken I don't tell them that I'm smarter than they are, so they should listen to me, you know. I don't point the finger; that doesn't work very well. Sometimes people who are really fired up about these issues forget that.

Of all the participants, Doherty was the most outspoken about the dangers of alienating the larger community and limiting the possibility of collaboration. Like other second generational thinkers Doherty advocates for working from within the system making small sustainable changes towards reform.

First generation participant responses included an exploration of the problems with the Cartesian dualism that is still present within the field. As mentioned in the literature review, this dualism allowed humans to identify primarily as an intellectual being which was the beginning of adopting the anthropocentric view that the physical, including the natural world and its resources were disposable and non-sacred. Most ecopsychologists point to the fact that humans do not exist outside their environment just as the brain does not exist without the body, thus illuminating a fundamental error in the Western approach to both medicine and psychology which treats symptoms and "parts" rather than holistic causes.

Greening The APA

The APA now supports psychologists' involvement in scientific research on global climate change and on the role of human behavior as a significant contributor. In 2017, the APA and The Climate for Health and Eco America put forth a report on climate change and "the psychological aspects of human environment relations". However, this report is problematic in that it continues to reflect the field's anthropocentric values. It does not take into account man's devastation on the environment, but rather, it suggests the beginning of a framework for how

psychologists can help people cope with the effects of climate change including counseling practices for psychologists working with climate refugees. The participants were asked: Does this report indicate that APA is making steps towards greening psychology?

Most of the participants agree this is a step towards greening psychology. Two added that the greening of psychology would only be possible if it became financially advantageous for the corporation of psychology (APA) to green. About half of the participants referenced Division 34 of the APA as being a driving force towards issuing the 2017 report. This division includes environmental psychology and conservation psychology. They noted this division has a positive influence on the greater field of psychology as it reflects a step towards ecological awareness.

Here, Hasbach expresses her view that this kind of report is a step towards greening the field of psychology as it takes the relationship between humans and the environment as part of a scientific study which can then lead to a greater ability to influence behavior changes.

> I think that over the years that I have been involved in APA there's definitely been a lot of shifts. The division 34 of APA which concentrates on environmental psychology and conservation psychology really has become quite an active division. I do think that APA has definitely grown in the clinical application of ecotherapy but they're also recognizing the psychological role of many social changes, in this case climate change. You know we can give people lots of facts and information but to try to change behaviors, we then have to understand more about their relationship with the environment. So I do think that over the last, certainly 6 to 10 years there has been greater appreciation of that relationship.

Doherty also acknowledges the report as a positive step towards raising awareness of the relationship between climate change and mental health. However, he also reminds us of the vastness of the field and its penchant for creating subdivisions and various categories of psychology and is therefore skeptical of the concept of greening psychology.

> The APA having the climate change task force years ago that I was involved in was a positive step …I think the reports are good as far as raising consciousness of people …and having that foundation about this idea that climate change does in fact effect mental health. Greening psychology on the other hand is a whole different thing … some sort of ecological vision for society, and that's a tougher issue. I don't know if it's

> possible to talk about psychology in any kind of unitary term, like there is an "it" that you are greening, a psychology "it" because psychology is this huge vast field.

The participants' responses all reflected the idea that this report is a step towards looking at our relationship with the natural world, but also skepticism about the significance it will have on the practice of psychology. Doherty's comment suggests limitations in making small changes from within the system and he also rejects the possibility and value of paradigm shifts. Straddlers such as Buzzell may take issue with this point of view as she suggested both small changes and system overhaul is helpful, needed, and possible.

Practice of Ecotherapy

The practice of EP widens the therapeutic lens from a traditional context of gender, race, age, and socioeconomic status to include the patient's current interaction with nature and animals, as well as their historical relationship to nature and animals. Ecotherapists often but not exclusively interact with their clients in an outdoor setting. They also explore their clients' feelings of hope or despair regarding environmental damage, and the climate crises, which is known within the field as eco anxiety. The following questions were asked to bring further clarity to the practice of ecotherapy: How is the intake process different for an ecotherapist? If you are not hearing [eco-anxiety] in a client's story how do you address it?

Four participants are both currently in practice and commented on their intake process. None of these four overtly advertise themselves as ecotherapists, rather, they integrate this orientation into their approach. Three of them write about it on their websites. None of the therapists push or lead their clients to talk about nature or eco-anxiety. Their ecotherapeutic approach can appear in several contexts.

Davenport has the following question about climate change on her therapy practice intake form: "When you hear about what's happening in the world, in particular climate change, how do

you feel, what do you notice, do you find it distressing?" She reported, "You know I get a little of everything like I don't really think about it, to wow great question, wasn't expecting this on a therapist form."

Hasbach and Buzzell ask about a client's relationship with nature during their intake process. Here Hasbach describes her intake process within the context of ecotherapy: "Part of my intake is talking a little bit about their relationship with the natural world while I'm getting information about their families of origin. If someone claims not to have much of a relationship with nature or doesn't care much about a relationship with nature, I just note it." Buzzell describes how her approach is more general in her intake process, but she also listens for themes that relate to ecopsychology:

> It's interesting to ask a client how they feel about the state of the world - perhaps not even mentioning the earth. It can be helpful to encourage talking about how the world was during their childhood and their parents' and grandparents' times and what they and perhaps their children and grandchildren are dealing with now. Very few clients aren't aware of the significant degeneration that's happened to quality of life, political and cultural degeneration, worsening health of the planet, etc. Asking people how they think things will be here on earth during their children's and grandchildren's lifetimes can also release a flood of thoughts and feelings.

Buzzell is describing how she is listening for ecopsychological themes without necessarily naming them for her client.

All of the participants who use ecopsychology and ecotherapy as a framework for practicing therapy are careful not to push an agenda with their clients. Here Davenport describes her technique of both understanding her clients from within an EP framework and how she may introduce ecotherapeutic techniques once the rapport is established:

> Notice if it makes a difference … putting your feet in the dirt … it could easily be a part of [therapeutic homework] along with watching your self-talk, it's not that hard [to introduce ecotherapeutic strategies] once there is that rapport and they are coming to you for help.

Hafford and Buzzell provided examples of how they hold the theoretical framework of EP and prescribe ecotherapeutic activities. Hafford takes people for walks and also leads adventure therapies. Buzzell meets people in her garden and practices horticulture therapy. Here Hafford describes why he utilizes ecotherapy within the ecopsychological context.

> It allows a wider experience than just clinician and client. There is the client and their environment and their challenge of whatever activity you are engaging in, whatever kind of natural experience they're having of observing a pond, or a stream, or a lake, or just about anything really. It allows for that kind of rich intersubjective experience, so that to me is a key element of what makes ecopsychology useful and relevant.

Professionalism and Credentials

Currently there are no credentials required for a person to utilize ecotherapy, and according to the literature review, a person can call themselves an ecotherapist without any formal training or professional affiliations. However, the title ecopsychologist requires a doctorate in psychology. The participants were asked: Currently there are no credentials needed for a person to administer ecotherapy, can you talk about the pros and cons of this? The participants' responses explored the issues surrounding professionalism and the benefits and drawbacks of the lack of credentialing.

In terms of mainstreaming ecotherapy half of the participants had some key concerns about why this would be harmful for the field. The two emerging reservation's themes were: the field should maintain its counterculture roots and philosophies, valuable practitioners without doctorates could be excluded.

Lions, who has no formal educational training, would be one of the practitioners excluded if credentials were needed to practice ecotherapy. He takes people on walks and hikes teaching foraging, medicinal plant identification, and various wilderness survival techniques. Lions reports zero incidents of illness or harm to his students in over a decade of teaching. He

has several thousand social media followers. Here Lions talks about his alternative "education" and how nature teaches people important lessons of perceiving themselves as part of a greater system and cycle.

> [I have no formal education] I am people educated and book educated, and internet educated, and workshop educated. I believe more in the Indian ideal I seek the teacher and sit with them. It's not about what kind of piece of paper you have it's the time you spend with people who are knowledgeable. I believe in elders and I'm constantly searching for what are the elders of this culture and also Rites of Passage because now we're about three years old emotionally, and adults intellectually. We don't necessarily get an emotional education [as children] and I believe that the number one cause of the disconnect and the lack of empathy and the suffering [in our culture] is because we're not taught how to perceive outside of ourselves.

Davenport, who has a master's in clinical psychology but not a doctorate, also felt it was important to be able to get involved in the movement without needing advanced degrees or titles. Here she describes how she navigates: "Well, I don't call myself that [an ecopsychologist or an ecotherapist], but I do say that I'm involved in climate psychology, which is tricky because I'm not a psychologist."

On the other hand, some participants expressed concerns around issues of competency and client safety resulting from lack of regulation. Including the issue of people practicing beyond their scope, which includes not properly assessing psychological needs or fragility as well as "leaders" not having expertise in keeping people physically safe in wilderness situations. Hafford expresses the dangers in non-accredited programs taking people to nature, but he also expresses concern about relying solely on that small pool of graduates who come out of our university system.

> Unfortunately, we have had some programs that have branded themselves Adventure therapy programs and they killed their participants by accident or through neglect or maltreatment. I think about, well what are we really looking for from ecopsychology and it is a return to a more reciprocal way of living with the world around us that, at the end of the day, we can continue living in this environment. I find it difficult to think that's only going to be done by licensed and credentialed providers verses … whatever the

> answer is, I just doubt it's going to come only from a handful of highly credentialed experts I'm just a very reluctant to endorse that view.

Without the boundaries or structures of a licensed field, there is not an agreed upon code of ethics to guide practitioners. Hasbach expresses the ethical risks that come with lack of regulation and the need for standards of competency:

> I think there are some pros and cons about it. I think I get concerned when people call themselves Ecotherapists and they've taken one class or a 3-hour workshop and I think that's true again with any pioneering field whether it's an education or psychology. So, people really have to be competent with not only the methods and therapeutic practices they're doing but also really need to be competent in the safety issues or have First Responders with them if they're really taking people out. And I think that's unique to ecotherapy but our ethics boards whether it's APA or ACA or social work ethics all of those have the expectation that we work within our field of competency and I think that's an important piece that covers all of it these topics.

Some participants' responses showed both sides of the issue discussing pros and cons of greater regulation. Buzzell reflects this paradox:

> I'm not recommending more regulation I believe that we have so much regulation in terms of our current psychological practice which there is reasons all of it have happened, there's been some really awful cases where people really have been damaged. So, it's the same thing with doctors I mean we want a certain amount of regulation we don't want doctors running around doing awful things. But at the same time you don't want to sort of squish the life out of something and you know a lot of it can be dealt with giving people informed consent you know really educating people so they can make a decision about if a visit is good for them is safe for them.

About half the participants voiced a need for specific practices to be examined such as who is qualified or has the cultural right to use indigenous ceremonial practices such as vision quests in pursuit of psychological healing. Buzzell discusses concerns about cultural appropriation and also safety of the clients: "I mean somebody could just anoint themselves some kind of Eco group and take people out. There are big questions even about Vision Quests first of all are they cultural appropriated? Second are the people involved actually trained?"

Accessibility to the Field

EP is gaining popularity in universities, but it is not well known outside academia or in the media. Participants were asked the following questions which address both why EP is not more popular and what can be done to promote the field and its philosophies: What can be done to allow greater accessibility to the field of ecopsychology and eco therapy? What do you think could/should be done to bring its message to a greater audience?

About half of the participants mentioned the field's association with higher education as being part of the problem in that it only influences a small demographic. Lions expresses this sentiment when he says:

> Academia is full of insightful ideas but nobody I know is reading psychological medical journals about ecopsychology on PubMed and in order for that to become different it needs to be presented in a way where it feels like it matters not just because it sounds intellectually convincing.

Kanner expressed concern that there is danger in losing the importance of the philosophical origins of ecopsychology in the contemporary halls of academia. He expressed the belief that an education around ecopsychology should be used as a way to educate and inform a more lay audience about the movement.

> Don't miss the big picture because I can tell you exactly what will happen [if professionals only focus on scholarly writing] you have a nice publication you'll have a nice career and you'll be in the Ivory Tower and nothing's going to change, and we don't have time . . . academic ideas and academia … have changed society but it's very slow process and so we need some other kind of idea of what it means to be an ecopsychologist that doesn't conform to the normal kind of career path.

This is indicative of first generation thinking that reflects the idea that ecopsychology is more than a degree or a career path: it is a means of activism that should ignite critical change that can help save the planet.

EP and Ethical Responsibility and Activism

Participants were asked the following question: What is the connection between promoting EP and your professional ethical responsibility as a therapist (teacher / researcher)?

There was a consensus around the idea that once the connection between environmental responsibilities and mental health (polluted planet and polluted mind) was made they experienced an awakening. Once this awareness is attained their world view was changed.

Hafford sums this sentiment up when he says:

> Well, I feel like if we know, we should help. And so, I think it's difficult to absolve ourselves once we have this knowledge. I think the futility of that effort is secondary to the ethical imperative, I guess. So yes, I think it's more of an ethic.

Buzzell expresses this responsibility through training psychologists as a way to educate others as ecotherapists and ecopsychologists.

> Well, how I see it and what I'm trying to do with my work, is being involved with training lots of existing mental health professionals in [EP philosophy and Ecotherapy techniques] and how to do it so we really have a lot of people all over the country who are willing and really good at working with people. It is evidenced-based therapy, which is a new sort of gold standard within therapy. My goal is to just make more of the existing people helpers aware that this exists as a tool that can be a part of their tool kit. Of course, I think it's much more than that but that's sort of that first step that I hope to see people take, just to get educated.

Popularity of Field

Another barrier to the popularity of the field, besides the lack of unity, in terms of theoretical differences, is the inability to gain traction in public discourse. Some of these barriers discussed by participants included the absence of a leadership figure and effective branding.

Lions suggests that perhaps a charismatic spokesperson for the field is needed; he is one of three participants who expressed this sentiment:

> I feel like psychology mutters amongst itself in these journals that are hidden away instead of being spokespeople. For example, Bill Nye or … Carl Sagan, these are people

> that can break the mold of just chattering in medical journals that actually can bridge the gap back into our societies.

Lions also expresses how the term “global warming” minimized the danger of the situation; he discusses how other terms could be more effective in helping people to conceptualize the scientific reality of climate change.

> In this movement environmental scientists are not very good at marketing or PR and when they came out with their presentation of environmental catastrophe, they said the wrong word which was ‘global warming’ and if they would have said … climate erraticness, or something different. If the meaning was something more encompassing of unstable environmental changes instead of ‘heating up’ then it would have been a totally different situation.

At the heart of it, EP is more than a cerebral experience. Participants mentioned that EP is not just an intellectual idea, and the solutions will not come from people experiencing something on an intellectual level. Participants suggested using art as a medium for increasing people’s empathy towards the environment or finding a charismatic spokesperson that can reach people’s emotions and ability to care for the environment. Many participants envision the purpose of the field to reach people on a more holistic level and ignite the passion necessary to save the planet.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

Ecopsychology (EP) looks at the pathology of North American culture and examines behaviors that put our planet at risk. This paper primarily used exploratory expert interviews to facilitate a deeper understanding of how EP is situated within the larger field of psychology and to highlight how restoring the human nature relationship is necessary for greater psychological wellbeing (which is also critical given the climate crises).

Most researchers and practitioners of EP agree a new perspective is needed to challenge the dominant social paradigm which views nature and the earth as expendable and separate from human health. In recent decades, the field has amassed a substantial amount of empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of ecotherapy (the applied practice of ecopsychology), but ecotherapy remains largely underutilized in part due to its radical roots and continued call for cultural change. There are divisions and concerns within the fields of ecopsychology and ecotherapy about how to have the greatest impact in eliciting change in clients and society.

To address the psychological effects of our disharmony with nature, ecopsychology arguably needs to have more influence within the greater field of psychology. The research suggests that experts and founding members of the movement believe it is critically important that both psychologists and laymen gain access to the tenants and philosophies of EP. While participants did care about the notoriety of the field, they were more interested in the ideas circulating, even if the tenants were not presented under the EP label.

The foundational ideas of EP are based on indigenous teachings which advocate for a reciprocal relationship with nature including the concept of “honorable harvest,” which instills the practice of taking only what is given (and needed). This approach is incompatible with our consumerist capitalistic culture. Many of the participants feel it is time for psychologists to take a

more active role in identifying and discouraging beliefs and attitudes that harm people and planet and to encourage more environmentally synergistic habits.

Three main themes emerged from the data: the importance of and obstacles to greening psychology, the value of utilizing the philosophical ideas behind EP, and how EP is a social movement that challenges larger societal structures' negative impact on person and planet.

Conflict Within the Field of Ecopsychology

Greening psychology is a term Roszak used to describe his belief that the broader field of psychology needs to widen the therapeutic lens to include EP principles which acknowledge the link between personal and planetary health. Roszack's sentiment that EP becoming its own field is less important than the philosophical approach infiltrating the broader field of psychology still rings true. One common theme that emerged from the expert interviews was that being under the umbrella of the EP label is less important than carrying on what is known as "the work" [Joanna Macey's term for being a green citizen].

Some, such as Hasbach, feel it is important to work under the label of EP to keep the body of work organized and moving forward. Others feel labels were useful at first to organize the collection of thoughts that started the EP movement, but now these ideas have infiltrated and influenced a broad variety of fields.

Doherty explains his view that EP can be used as a foundation for individuals to study or pursue fields and specific approaches that are not necessarily under the umbrella of EP yet incorporate EP ideas such as conservation psychology, climate psychology, and psycho education surrounding living in balance with the planet's resources. De Lion, Davenport, and Doherty use the foundational ideas of EP to address psychological health in the time of climate crises, yet none of them consider themselves active in the field of EP. De Lions, Davenport, and Doherty

share the first generational thinking that activism is a greater pressing issue than identifying as part of the field of ecopsychology.

Doherty reminds us that EP did not start out as an academic field, "It started out as a kind of grassroots field and it's always had a hard time finding a footing in academia." He describes how there was not consensus about:

> foundational assumptions where everyone agreed. So it wasn't founded in a logical systemic way like other academic fields, where there would be some general agreement about a knowledge base and a research base and some empirical bases. It was born more ideologically more as a movement as a social movement.

Doherty commented, "I'm not actively involved in EP right now, I'm not teaching and I'm not working with the journal," and explained that he used the label "first generation" to describe the differences in thinking that emerged in his generation versus the original thinkers: "It was really just more descriptive in the sense that I was of a different generation than Theodore Roszak … I was born while he was writing his first [articles] so that was a different generation." Some, including Buzzell, argue that Doherty's labels of "first generation" and "second generation" could be interpreted as derisive to first generation thinkers. Buzzell reflected on how the labels could be viewed as insulting and "almost a fighting term that somebody came up with to basically insult the people who started the field, saying that we had not been scientific enough." Buzzell does not strictly align with either generational view and feels both are necessary for the enrichment and forward movement of the field.

> I always see EP as a big tent and there's plenty of room for …the traditional science people … but I don't think there is any need to kind of trash the early people who come from a little bit more philosophical and spiritual [background].

Within EP, there is difference of opinion as to what approach will actually create a greener society. Doherty feels that the most effective way to create change is to work from within the system. He does not believe that first generation approach of creating a new society is

possible and that effective activism involves learning how to work from within the system to make changes. According to Doherty, radical approaches are a waste of time and energy. Doherty suggests that because "some of the early people … were against science or academia … it kind of stopped the field from actually growing to be a movement." Doherty identifies as a pragmatist and argues:

> If you want to make change in society, I mean at any level … you know, there are certain ways to do that. Part of that is having a very clear argument . . . and being very systematic so people can understand where you are coming from. Some of the folks that do environmental work and eco psyche work don't do that kind of thing. It sort of becomes a you are with me or against me.

According to Doherty, currently the EP label is not necessarily going to afford any traction in making societal changes, due to the counterculture roots and the tendency for black and white thinking within the field. Doherty suggests the label can actually be an obstacle for the movement being taken seriously within certain platforms.

Hasbach expresses her view that regardless of first generation second generation labels, her efforts were grounded in the desire to move the field forward by recognizing the importance of both the more radical beginnings of the field and the move towards a body of empirical evidence.

> Yeah, I never thought that it was, you know a confrontational phrase, if you really look at the forward in our book … one of the things that we wanted to emphasize was really moving the field forward on some work that had been done that was pioneering work and really important work to call out and identify the human and nature relationship. What we were trying to do was not only heal a divide but move it forward and to recognize that there is good work being done in environmental psychology and there is good work being done in conservation psychology and that grounds a lot of the work that we would do.

Hasbach chalks up the tension to a natural outgrowth of the field finding its voice. "I guess I've been in this long enough [to see] there's been different waves [in the field of EP] and anytime there's transition people tend to get edgy about that."

Doherty inadvertently threw out these labels as descriptive terms to distinguish differing views and directions the field of EP could take. His labels brought clarity to what some view as opposing forces within the field, which creates obstacles for unification and strength and ultimately hinder the ability to spread key ideas that are important to humanity. Yet regardless of Doherty naming the distinction, the dynamic nature of the field lends to a broad variety of interpretations of which paths to take. Many feel there is enough room for all these differing ideas and that the labels moved the conversation forward creating traction. Ultimately, now years later, most advocate for getting away from or not worrying too much about whether something fits under the umbrella label of EP, but rather focus on how to make skillful practical change.

Doherty is not interested in which generation is "right," but rather holds the view that the ideas of EP are alive and well and spreading through other fields (such as ecology and medicine) that utilize nature as a healing resource. This idea of the fundamental importance of fostering (or remembering) the relationship between man and nature is one that is unanimously backed by all participants as essential to healing planet and person.

Davenport is a licensed integrative psychotherapist and does not affiliate with ecopsychology or ecotherapy. She calls herself a "climate psychology consultant." She explained that as an activist she felt an urgency to distribute her book, *Emotional Resiliency in the Era of Climate Change - A Clinicians Guide*, as a practical tool for clinicians to help their clients navigate the climate crises. I included her as a participant to evaluate what was happening in this arena, but outside the eco psychological label. In her book and the interview, she maps out a way through "eco angst" to connect or reconnect with nature in a way that is sustainable to our psyche and the earth. She does so without a doctorate and without the EP label. The main points Davenport is arguing for are a greening of all fields, bringing psychology to the climate crises

table, focusing on activism (specifically how to deal with denial), and changing eco habits. In the interview data it emerged that Davenport did not want to be constrained by the title of being an ecopsychologist, and she did not want to be bogged down in the politics of the field. Davenport stated that she wanted to "throw myself into where I had the most weight." Despite not being affiliated with the field, it could be argued that Davenport's approach is very "first generational" as it is motivated by activism.

The Value of the Broader Philosophical Ideas in Ecopsychology

Some core tenants of EP should be foundational to any psychological approach. Just as traditional psychology looks at the importance of family systems as essential for helping clients, EP maintains that one must place themselves in the larger system of nature and have a relationship to it. The literature suggests that psychologists from all backgrounds and approaches might consider a wider lens in their definition of "environment" to include our relationship with the natural world. We are part of the system of nature and locating ourselves within that system helps fight against isolation, rumination, depression, and narcissistic thinking, which are arguably the roots of all mental illness. Ecopsychologists recognize indigenous knowledge and a traditional approach to the environment as the only way out of the eco crises, specifically the idea that a reciprocal relationship with nature fosters a healthier psychological mindset and detracts from habitual narcissistic thinking.

The participants emphasized the importance of the indigenous practice of reciprocity. Kanner mentions how Native American colleagues view reciprocity as it relates to psychological health: "If you got something from working with nature that was healing, giving back in some meaningful way [is] necessary for full healing to occur." Kanner advocates for psychologists

“explicitly talking to people about how they're going to give back” to nature as part of their role as re educators.

Eco-anxiety

The eco-psychological perspective views mental illness as going hand in hand with the debilitated state of global ecosystems and advocates for an improved relationship with nature. The data reveals the importance of having a theoretical background in EP, including how clinicians should listen for various aspects of eco anxiety. Because eco anxiety is so prevalent and is increasingly being acknowledged by the APA, it is important to screen for this with clients. Davenport, Hasbach, Buzzell, and Hafford elaborated on the benefits of knowing the features of eco anxiety and the importance of being sophisticated about it. As Davenport explains, “You can’t tell a client they have eco anxiety, but you’re listening for it.” Scull describes his perspective on how to have an ecopsychological ear while working with clients. “In your game plan you’re thinking ecologically, you’re thinking politically, and you’re thinking this bigger picture … but you wouldn’t necessarily ask questions that would evoke those answers.”

Buzzell explains how she incorporates an EP approach even with people who may deny climate crises issues:

> It’s interesting to ask a client how they feel about the state of the world—perhaps not even mentioning the earth. It can be helpful to encourage talking about how the world was during their childhood … Very few clients aren’t aware of the significant degeneration that’s happened to quality of life, political and cultural degeneration, worsening health of the planet, etc. Asking people how they think things will be here on Earth during their children’s and grandchildren’s lifetimes can also release a flood of thoughts and feelings.

In Buzzell’s response, we can see that guiding clients to think of their families in eco terms illustrates why the therapeutic lens should be widened to include EP.

Ecopsychology needs to be incorporated into the broader field of psychology because repressed material leads to being symptomatic. Buzzell expounds on her approach in holding an ecopsychological lens to work with what she calls eco grief.

> I believe that most people on the planet who have heard of environmental issues are in some way affected, either consciously or unconsciously. For many people, the frightening information is rejected or repressed until some new local or distant crisis makes it no longer deniable. Underlying anxiety is often there, no matter how vigorously or emphatically we've denied the existential threat to human and non-human life. When an ecotherapist asks people how they're feeling about what's happening in the world, or in nature, often a flood of previously unexpressed anxiety and eco-grief emerges.

A working knowledge of EP enables clinicians to recognize the root of eco anxiety and correctly diagnose.

Ecopsychology as Therapeutic Tool

Ecotherapy, as the applied practice of EP, is a valuable tool for any therapist as the natural world is abundant in metaphors and can inspire introspection and reflection. Scull expands on this idea of the necessity of integrating EP as a theoretical approach in therapy, creating insight into our cultural tendency towards isolation and narcissism and how nature can help heal this and bring people out of isolation and into a felt sense of being part of a system and community. Scull argues that part of the therapeutic process:

is getting people out of themselves, getting them to think about their children, their family, their community, or the natural world … and nature is a very powerful way to do that if people have any connection with a natural world. Hafford gives his opinion on how including the natural environment within the therapeutic relationship can lead to insight. Hafford advocates for taking clients into nature as this "allows a wider experience than just clinician and client" and assists clients in "finding their own answers."

> I suppose for me ecopsychology is really the merging of … cultivating an intimate understanding of your environment, your place in that environment and what it has to teach you, and within that there are a lot of natural opportunities to work on the things that were struggling with inherently as humans. It is a rich and interpretive environment, and we are meaning making machines so it just makes sense to me to be in [nature because there is so] much of a dynamic between us and the environment we inhabit.

The data echoed core tenants of ecopsychology, specifically that a symbiotic relationship with the environment is of paramount importance. The emotional connection that people have to nature is seen as integral to health. Healing can be obtained through direct interaction with nature. Scull echoes the idea of nature supporting the client to discover their own truths.

> So I think a lot of it is any good therapist spends a lot of time listening to a client and building the therapy around them. Just like I was saying before, you don't want to bring your psychological theories and impose them on nature, but that applies to therapy and generally you don't want to take your theories and impose them on your clients. My mentor in neuroscience years and years ago said that patients, as we called them in those days, the patient has all the answers, you just have to ask the right questions and nature has all the answers.

Utilizing eco therapeutic technique can enrich the therapeutic process.

Dualism

Most ecopsychologists point to the fact that the brain does not exist without the body just as the human does not exist outside the environment, thus illuminating a fundamental error in the Western approach to both medicine and psychology, which treats symptoms rather than holistic causes. Buzzell explains the connection between Dualism and anthropocentric narcissism. Our dualistic thinking has led to increased planetary and personal dis-ease. Buzzell explains the dangers of this narcissism:

> I think it started a long time ago, some people take it [back] to agriculture, some people take it to patriarchies, some people take it to the industrial revolution, some people take it to Descartes, some people take it to Genesis … the whole idea that God gave us this planet to do whatever the hell we wanted with it. I mean there's a lot of places where you can see the antecedent to our current situation. How do we get away from these ideas? It's what I call 'the big lie' that humans are separate or superior to the rest of nature. If you want the philosophical origin of our current mess that would be it. So that's what we're trying to do is recover from 'the big lie' into what I call 'the deep truth,' which is

> that we are embedded in nature, we're not separate from it, or superior to it, that's the 'truth.'

EP has always tried to push the field towards what Buzzell is describing as "the deep truth." Therapists and practitioners have a responsibility to adopt the theoretical framework of EP and push back against our pathological culture.

Greenway (2009) pointed to dualistic thinking as "perhaps the source of our pervasive sense of being disconnected" from the natural world (p. 131). The cornerstone of Western psychology continues to be Freud's theory that repressed material leads to symptomatic behavior. Most westerners in urban environments are not aware of their grief and anxiety resulting from a diminishing relationship with nature. Ecopsychologists view this disconnection and repression as largely responsible for the sharp rises in mental health issues in recent decades.

Ecopsychology as a Movement that Challenges Larger Structures

EP analyzes and acknowledges the harmful effects of living in a culture deeply immersed in a system of colonialism, speciesism, capitalism, and consumerism. One of the more noteworthy aspects of the original EP movement is its critique of the larger field of psychology. There was a unanimous consensus from both first and second generation participants that psychologists need to take a more active role in pushing against various aspects of our culture that are harmful to human psychological health.

Referring to the founders of the movement of EP, Hasbach explains "they were very vocal about critiquing psychology and really looking at the field as something that … is being used to fuel consumerism and a lot of the things that are detrimental to our environment." This critique of psychology was a part of a movement that challenges larger structures.

Rethinking what aspects of our environment deserve respect has stemmed from ongoing reexamination of privilege and behavior towards minorities. Fisher (2012) commented the call

for a revolution has been "in the air since the 1960s, with all the social, cultural, and personal changes that it implies" (p. 81). Fisher (2012) punctuates:

> Ecopsychology has taken the 'eco' in its name quite seriously. Rather than accept the dualism and reductionism that is typical of Western culture and positivist science, ecopsychology has been accepting of other worldviews, particularly those of indigenous peoples and of Asian spiritual traditions. (p. 81)

Almost all of the participants shared the first generational critique of the field of psychology's unwillingness to comment or call out the harmful effects of capitalism which is viewed as the corner stone of environmental crises. In the data, capitalism is discussed as a powerful structure which, with its inherent base of advertising and consuming, is extremely incompatible with health of people and planet. As Kanner explains, to achieve greater cultural psychological health, "the narcissistic wounding of the public by the advertising industry will have to stop." It is widely agreed upon in all psychological fields that humans have two basic needs, the need for attachment and the need for authenticity. These needs are manipulated by advertising companies in the support of capitalistic gain at the expense of our psychological and emotional health. The central and pervasive message being that one is not enough as they are and must engage in constant consuming.

In the Western tradition of psychology, it was widely accepted that psychologists should be silent listeners reflecting the client's inner world. Hafford's response illuminates the notion that more active guiding towards holistic health is appropriate.

> I take heart in the words of Clarence Darrow that we should 'comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable,' because I think it's totally true for us as psychologists, it's like what is our role? Is our role to help people get over their depression and anxiety so that they can become better consumers and define the structure that ends our species? Or is our role to uncover and examine the underpinnings? Maybe depression and anxiety are a normal response to destructive human patterns of living? Are there other frames that we can be pursuing? I think that is a hopeful piece for us may be a role in that afflicting the comfortable and honestly as a field we have been very comfortable for a long time I'm happy that there is some discomfort.

Hafford is not only arguing for "afflicting" the client, but also for challenging the status quo of the larger field of psychology. Hafford questions what psychology's role should be in the context of treating clients. He argues that decreasing anxiety and depression is not enough, but that there is a larger responsibility to actually influence a client's world view towards greater sustainability. All participants focused on clinicians' responsibilities towards their clients in the face of the climate crises. What participants emphasized more than which label they viewed themselves as falling under was the agreement that all clinicians within the broader field of psychology need to be examining their role and taking a more directive stance to address the link between personal and planetary health.

The participants' interviews illustrate how a capitalist, consumerist lifestyle is harmful and suggests that difficult and extreme changes must be made, which is challenging for individuals to acknowledge. According to some of the participants, because members of the field look critically at "taboo" subjects such as economic oppression and the links between capitalism, environmental degradation, and mental illnesses, the field is frequently marginalized. Kanner offers one example of how to achieve cultural change starting with individual clients when he advocates for psychologists to acknowledge and address what he refers to as "economic oppression." Kanner points out that psychologists are now comfortable discussing many oppressive social norms with clients:

> This is one of the ironic things … we've done that with sexism, we've done that with racism, we've done that with a number of forms of social oppression where somebody comes in and they've been subjected to harassment at work or something like that we will bring up patriarchy, but we won't bring up capitalism, the economy. [Psychologists and clients exploring] social oppression is okay now, but economic oppression, is still taboo.

As Kanner explains, it is easy to alienate audiences when speaking of economic structures because in western culture pursuits of financial gain at all costs (such as damaging physical and mental health, relationships, and the environment) is accepted as normal. Larger

structures (such as corporations) are even more resistant to change as they function not as humans that can awaken to personal consequences of environmental degradation, but as mechanisms designed to sustain themselves through financial gain. Pilisuck views the broader field of psychology as one such cultural structure absent of humanity. He explains the limitations of the broader field of psychology in facilitating cultural change:

> Psychology is really a large corporate professional endeavor and to the extent that it can do things that regard racial equality or environmental concerns without rocking the boat they are happy to do that, they get good publicity for doing that. Where it starts to affect their bottom line as an organization, they're much more reluctant.

This reflects a unanimous consensus among participants, that as an organization, the APA does not have what is best for person and planet at the top of their agenda. Part of having an ecopsychological lens is to be able to recognize the effects of economic oppression and the limitations of doing therapy within the structural limitations of the APA (as the leading organization representing psychology in America). Pilisuk goes on to illustrate how APA, in their intent to secure their reputation, is willing to consider covering up morally questionable actions. His specific example was regarding the Hoffman report in 2017.

> The APA had commissioned and later rejected the results of the report because it found the APA really culpable in covering for the contracts that psychologists were making in the military and allowing psychologists to work in Guantanamo Bay. Fortunately, [at the February 2017 meeting in San Francisco, they voted to keep the full account in the Hoffman report], but it will come up again it reflects the fact that APA is part of a larger system of obsessional control and it is not going to rock its major financial sources.

Although participants recognize that the APA has begun to make small changes towards greening psychology, for example, officially recognizing the harmful effects of climate change on the psyche, progress is limited and slow because of their corporate agenda. Challenging these larger systems is considered radical, even if it is for the sake of planetary health. The data revealed this radical vein still active in the field.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study is there were no indigenous participants interviewed. The lack of indigenous voices is problematic because much of the underlying philosophical approach to ecopsychology is rooted in indigenous wisdom. Several participants emphasized the importance of enacting ideas such as reciprocity and an honorable harvest. Not hearing from indigenous peoples themselves, but rather hearing about their models from white participants, may result in misinterpretation and appropriation of ideas. Participants characterized EP as a social justice movement that analyzes and challenges powerful sociological and economic structures while also recognizing indigenous people as stewards of the land whose approach to a relationship with nature can lead to greater psychological and planetary health.

Another limitation is there could have been more female voices in my sample: female voices would have been helpful as many aspects of ecopsychology attribute patriarchy as contributing to the domination of nature. In particular, Mary Gomes was highly influential in starting the ecopsychological movement and would have added more depth and nuanced information from an eco-feminist perspective.

As I was crafting my questions, I had a slight bias towards the more radical first generation thinking which steered me in the direction of seeking to illuminate the generational divide. This bias placed too much emphasis on generational divide: there could have been more questions about the influence of indigenous knowledge on EP, which would have resulted in more commentary about what ecopsychologists envision as necessary to combat climate change. One unexpected finding was both “sides” [first generation and second generation thinkers] share common viewpoints and goals, which are utilization of nature as an integral part of holistic health and engaging in research and conversation which promote ecopsychological ideas.

Recommendations For Further Research

Future studies should include indigenous voices. Future studies should also include more eco feminists who are practicing EP as the philosophy of EP is arguably rooted in challenges to the patriarchy.

Final Thought

All the participants viewed the eco crises as a symptom of collective mental illness (to destroy one's home and food supply is not "sane"). EP also looks at how to slow or even reverse the eco crises. The data was unanimous in stating the importance of "remembering" a relationship between nature and humans. Locating ourselves within the system is integral for mental health, but also will lead to better ecological practices.

Greening psychology is the next evolution of psychology. Freud started with a narrow lens focused on the individual, and the lens has widened to include family systems and the feminist approach of locating a person within socio economic and cultural context.

Buzzell (2016) explains that "psychologists will be called on to treat conditions specific to our historical moment, such as eco-anxiety, eco-grief, eco-trauma, eco-shame, eco-despair, and trauma from forced migration." Ecotherapists embrace principles of ecopsychology. They believe that reconnecting to nature can improve physical and mental health while encouraging people to uncover new solutions to long-standing environmental problems.

Ecotherapists may soon be considered important first responders at any environmental trauma scene, using techniques to facilitate transition and restoration of the community commons, to help build personal and community eco-resilience, and to serve as catalysts in the collective recovery from consumerism (Buzzell, 2016).

EP does not have to look like other fields within psychology. This is part of its value. The field still holds the flames of authenticity and creates an avenue for people to reconnect with nature to have transformational experiences that can inspire healing for self and planet. There is a need to protect the non-regulated “wild” part of the field which reflects the crux of one of the foundational ideas of ecopsychology which is the need to protect the “wild” unregulated part of ourselves and the “wild” part of nature.

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APPENDIX A: Interview Questions

1.Will you share your ecological story?

Who is your ecological self?

2. Do you believe in an ecological unconscious?

What is your relationship to this?

How do you see this concept at work in your life?

3. What is your personal definition of ecopsychology?

What are the key tenets in your definition?

What has traditionally been a part of the field that is no longer relevant or that needs to evolve?

4. Ecopsychology has not yet been recognized as a central therapeutic approach. Roszak's hope of 'greening psychology' has also not come to fruition. What do you think could/should be done to bring its message to a greater audience?

What is the connection between promoting EP and your professional ethical responsibility as a therapist (teacher/ researcher)?

5. Can you describe the divide in the field between first and second generation and walk me through why you fall on one side or another?

How do you respond to the criticism/ idea that mainstreaming EP will cause it to become co-opted and less potent?

How do you respond to the idea that if we don't mainstream EP we're withholding the elixir?

6. Recently, the APA and The Climate for Health and Eco America have put forth a report on

Climate Change and “the psychological aspects of human environment relations.” The APA now supports psychologists’ involvement in scientific research on global climate change and on the role of human behavior as a significant contributor to these changes. In reference to this report does this appear to be a step towards greening psychology.

7. Is there a stigma attached to identifying as an EP, and or an ET?
8. Currently there are no credentials needed for a person to administer ecotherapy, can you talk about the pros and cons of this?
9. Do you think the present political climate; monuments shrinking, an increase in oil drilling, and roll backs on emission regulations, is this a last pushback from a growing green liberal outlook, or a symptom of things getting worse?
10. We are also seeing good things in the media on a civilian level such as: ‘The last straw Campaign,’ various ocean cleanups, the awareness of the pacific garbage patch, social media encouraging reduction in waist and packaging, Joanna Macey calls this evidence of “the great turning.”
    - Do you agree?
    - Is this enough?
    - Is there hope?
    - If so where else do you see it?
11. How do you manage your own ecoanxiety?

    If you’re not hearing it in a client’s story, how do you address it?
12. Is it presumptuous to assume everyone is in an eco-crisis? What of people who feel:
    - It’s not as bad as it seems
    - b. We’re meant to self-destruct?

13. Some, such as Sbicca (2011) have noted the similarities of queer theory to EP as post-modern social justice movements. EP and queer both resist the mechanistic reductionist, "Cartesian," view of man and nature as separate and suggests there are more 'ways of knowing' in place of and in addition to the scientific method. Do you think queer theory has been more popular and successful in invoking societal change?

13. EP makes cultural diagnoses such as addiction (to consumerism), egoism, narcissism, a separation or loss of authentic self. Roszak and Metzner among others draw attention to our lack of initiation rites leading to Ontological crippling.

- Do you agree?
- If so where do you see evidence of this in media/ culture?

14. The survivors from the Parkland shootings mentioned many social justice issues but did not mention the eco crises. Your thoughts on this?

APPENDIX B: Letter to Participants

Dear ( )

I am a fourth-year graduate student pursuing my doctorate in clinical psychology at Antioch University, Santa Barbara. The tenet of ecopsychology which states that the health of planet and person are inextricably intertwined resonates deeply with me. For my dissertation I will interview experts in the field to obtain understanding experientially, of thoughts and feelings about the current and possible future status of the field, specifically regarding accessibility and utilization. The experts interviewed will have written extensively and will likely have strong opinions surrounding the controversy regarding the future of the field. The purpose of this research, however, is to determine the views *at the time of the interview*.

Ecopsychology is, by definition, a changing, growing philosophy. Using this lens, this project seeks to comprehend the complexity of issues as perceived by respected specialists in this field, including their opinions concerning climate crises and human health. This project seeks to contribute to the academia surrounding the legitimization of ecopsychology by incorporating emotion and feeling as a guide to understanding. Through these interviews I hope to reveal hidden obstacles, possibilities, and or new directions for unification of the field.

I am contacting you because of your expertise in the field of ecopsychology. I am eager to secure a mixed sample of psychologists, therapists, authors, professors, and philosophers who are involved with ecotherapy and or ecopsychology in their personal and professional lives. Thank you so much for your consideration of this project.

Respectfully,

Nicole Auckerman

APPENDIX C: Consent Form

Project Title: The Future of Ecopsychology

Project Investigator: Nicole Auckerman

Dissertation Chair: Susan Hawes

1. *I understand that the nature of this study is purely research based. It may offer no direct benefit to me.*

2. *Participation in this study is voluntary. I may refuse to enter or may withdraw at any time without creating any harmful consequences to myself. I understand also, that the investigator may dismiss me at any time from the study at her sole discretion*.

3. **The purpose of this study is**: **a**. To gauge the possibilities of the philosophy of ecopsychology to infiltrate mainstream psychology and academia. **b**. To understand the challenges, including inherent benefits and risks if the field should become mainstream. **c.** To comprehend the complexity of issues, as perceived by respected specialists in this field including their opinions concerning climate crises and human health.

4. *As a participant in the study, I will be asked to take part in the following procedures*:

A skype or in-person interview lasting approximately one hour.

1. *The risks, discomforts and inconveniences of the above procedures might be*: **a**. having to think deeply and reflectively on psychology and the state of the planet. **b**. disclosing information on my personal journey and belief system regarding ecopsychology and ecotherapy. Some of these views may not be popular or congruent with generally accepted belief systems.

5. It is my personal choice as to whether I would like to participate anonymously or have my opinions/ experience linked to my name.

6. The possible benefits of the **a.** To reflect on my experiences as a professional. **b**. To find greater meaning in my work. **c**. To educate and inform others about the field of ecopsychology and or the health benefits of human interaction with nature. **d.** To continue the pedological discussion around psychology and healing practices.

7. *Information about the study was discussed with me by* Nicole Auckerman.

If I have further questions, I can call her at xxx-xxx-xxxx *I may email her at* xxxxx@xxxxxxx.xxx.

8. Though the purpose of this study is primarily to fulfill my requirement to complete a formal research project as a dissertation at Antioch University, I also intend to include the data and results of the study in future scholarly publications and presentations. Our confidentiality agreement, as articulated above, will be effective in all cases of data sharing.

Signed:_____Date:_____