PSYCHOTHERAPY PROCESS RESEARCH

Paradigmatic and Narrative Approaches

Shaké G. Toukmanian
David L. Rennie
editors

8

Metaphor and the Communication Interaction in Psychotherapy

A Multimethodological Approach

LYNNE E. ANGUS

The following chapter is an overview of a series of investigations that have emerged from an initial qualitative study of metaphor in psychotherapy. Following a discussion of the core findings from this project, a series of quantitative studies, designed to explore correlates identified in the qualitative analyses, are described. Accordingly, the overall approach may be characterized as one of methodological pluralism. With this approach, an attempt is made to explicate phenomena and to test hypotheses back and forth between quantitative and qualitative research methods and designs. Findings emerging from the contrasting contexts of field and laboratory research paradigms are juxtaposed to synthesize the research results into a cohesive model. New avenues for further inquiry follow from this integrated perspective.

Metaphor in Psychotherapy: A Qualitative Analysis

In an initial qualitative study, 11 metaphor episodes selected from four therapy dyads were examined from the perspective of the client, the therapist, and the researcher. The latter was an external observer of

the therapeutic interaction. Four pairs of therapists and clients were recruited for the study. One therapist was a psychoanalyst, another was a Gestalt/experiential therapist, and the remaining two were eclectics working within a person-centered and psychodynamic framework. Two therapists had more than 25 years of experience in the field, one had 15 years of experience, and the fourth had been practicing for 5 years. All of the therapists were men. The four clients who participated in the study had been in therapy for at least 12 sessions. Three of these clients were women attending postsecondary institutions while the fourth client was employed as a salesman.

The study was limited to a single audiorecorded therapy session of each of the four dyads. When selecting metaphor episodes from the therapy session tapes, the expanded definition of metaphor as advanced by Lakoff and Johnson (1980) was used as a general guideline. According to this definition, *metaphor* is a form of verbal expression and cognitive structuring that invokes a transaction between different contexts of meaning and construct systems. A concrete example might be helpful to make this definition clear. Paivio (1979) suggests that we understand a figurative expression such as "metaphor is a solar eclipse" by filtering our conceptual system of metaphor through the imagery-laden context of a solar eclipse. This integration of two differing contexts of meaning (i.e., metaphor versus a solar eclipse) results in a reconceptualization of metaphor where, like a solar eclipse, it may now be construed as both obscuring and revealing phenomena. The 11 metaphor episodes selected for intensive analysis in this study were judged to have met this definition.

Separate inquiry interviews with the client and therapist of each dyad were conducted within 24 hours of the therapy session. During the inquiry, the selected instances of metaphoric interchanges were replayed a few words at a time. A variation of Kagan's (1975) Interpersonal Process Recall procedure was carried out. The respondents were asked to recall thoughts, images, emotions, and feelings that they were experiencing at the moment in the session represented in the tape segment just played. Care was taken to have the participants attempt to discriminate between actual recall of their experiences and construction of what they were likely experiencing in the light of their reflection on it during the inquiry. Each inquiry interview was audiotaped and transcribed.

The procedures involved in the analysis of the inquiry interviews may be viewed as a blend of empirical phenomenology (Giorgi, 1970) as practiced by Fessler (1978) and grounded theory (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) as practiced by Rennie, Phillips, and Quartaro (1988). Each participant's metaphoric interchange was summarized in terms of the participant's recalled experience of it during the session as well as his or her understanding of it upon reflection, having heard it a second time in the inquiry interview. A third vantage point was provided by observations of the interviewer/researcher. These summaries provided a moment-by-moment comparison of each client's and therapist's experiences as they moved through the metaphoric sequences during the therapy session.

A category system was developed simultaneously with and directly from these summaries. Initially, each characteristic or property of metaphor that was either displayed by the participants or conceptualized by the researcher was entered as a heading on an index card, assigned a number, and dated. A total of 676 cards resulted from this analysis. After the analysis of the inquiry transcripts of the first two dyads, the index cards were sorted in terms of conceptualized, unifying themes. Subsequently, as the analyses of the remaining transcripts were completed, the components of the category system were resorted to better reflect the themes.

As the number of themes increased, two global categories emerged that represented perceived relationships among the themes. One global category was titled the Associated Meaning Context (Angus & Rennie, 1989), the components of which represented the participant's initial experience of either saying or hearing the metaphor in the session. The other global category to emerge was titled the Metaphoric Communication Interaction (Angus & Rennie, 1988), wherein the dyadic style of communication was related to the development of either shared understanding or misunderstanding between client and therapist.

The following presentation of my current research program is organized into three sections. The first two sections deal with the Associated Meaning Context and the Communication Interaction, respectively, and describe the quantitative studies that were designed to validate the patterns that emerged from the qualitative analysis. The third and final section details the implications of these findings for future process research studies and for psychotherapy practice.

The Associated Meaning Context

The Associated Meaning Context category represents the initial impact of hearing or speaking the metaphor in the session and is characterized as a juncture point in the communication interaction. This category has three main properties: (a) metaphor as associative link, (b) metaphor as self-identity, and (c) metaphor as role relationship pattern.

The participants' intrasubjective experiences at these juncture points often involved an initial awareness of kinesthetic sensations and/or emotional responses. To give meaning to their experiences, the participants then proceeded to embed their felt experiencing within an associated context or network of thematically linked memories and visual images. It became apparent that one of the major organizing principles of the Associated Meaning Context was the particular set of role relationship patterns that underscored the network of visual images and recollected memories related to the metaphor spoken in the session. It was in this way that certain metaphors came to be understood by both members of the therapy dyad as symbolic representations of the client's beliefs about self and others.

In most instances, the client's reflection upon the metaphor in the session led to the elaboration of specific memories or images related to an inner experience. Furthermore, in the inquiry interview, these memories led to additional elaboration of important themes. For example, the metaphor sequence titled "all covered up" began with the client making connections between her daughter's relationship with her eldest child and her own experiences of having been the oldest child in a family. As she put it, "having had to be a 'good' baby somehow makes me feel angry." In the inquiry interview, the client recalled that, as she spoke in the therapy session, an image came to mind:

> I was recalling how I must have felt as a baby. I had an image of myself when I was about a year old and I was dressed in this little white dress and I had little stockings on that are white and go all the way down, and I just feel all covered up. I was having the sensation, as a baby, of being distanced from myself by my clothes (pause) all covered up or closed in. At the beginning of the sequence I think I was feeling this sort of veil or whatever and it distanced me from my own feelings and the photograph of myself as a baby just popped into my mind (pause) I suppose, looking like how I was feeling then.

In the session, the client had then described this vivid image to the therapist, again noting that she had felt all covered up as she had visualized the photograph in her mind's eye.

In the inquiry, the therapist recalled that, at this moment in the session,

> When she said, "I had a picture" and then said "covered up," I saw a crib and I saw the—even the face of the baby was covered up—I don't know if that was her (image) and I didn't bother to check it out but I did have that picture throughout (pause) this child in a crib and a kind of white woolly blanket totally covering her, almost like she were dead in a sense.

He stated further that he understood the client's description of herself in the photograph as being like a "giant metaphor" for how she viewed herself interacting with others in the world. He went on to say,

> It seems like she is saying there has always been, or "I've always felt covered up, there has always been something between me and others, which they couldn't touch me or I couldn't be touched;" it's one of the ways she has felt herself to be in the world all her life.

His request to the client in the session—to describe how it felt to be "covered up"—reflected his hope that the client would "stay with the awareness of her subjective experiencing" and explore further the feelings evoked by the imaged photograph.

In response to the therapist's question, the client said: "It makes me feel the way I feel now, itchy (pause) as if my skin were saying 'touch me.' It really is; when you itch you want to rub and things like that. My skin is saying 'touch me.' " With this description, she had linked the experience, which she had felt in relation to imaging herself as a baby "all covered up," with her current feelings as an adult in relation to significant others. The metaphoric context of a baby unable to physically touch its own body or be touched by others vividly articulated her current sense of being "out of touch" with herself and emotionally cutoff from others. The meaning conveyed by the metaphor appears to have evolved out of an interpretive process whereby the client had achieved a synthesis of her current bodily experiencing within the metaphoric context of a baby "all covered up."

In summary, the foregoing metaphor sequence exemplifies the three properties of the Associated Meaning Context in the following ways: (a) The metaphor "all covered up" functioned as an associative link that thematically integrated an emotional state and an associated visual image with her current sense of feeling disconnected from others; (b) the imaginal representation of a baby covered in woolly clothing came

to articulate one aspect of this client's sense of self; and (c) the scope of the metaphor was extended by both the client and her therapist to include the client's sense of self in her current relationship with others (the felt inability to touch or be touched emotionally by another). In general, this co-constructive process of meaning transformation, in which bodily feeling states and imaginal associations are articulated within the framework of a verbal metaphor, was evident in the accounts given by therapists and clients engaged in collaborative interactions (Angus & Rennie, 1988).

The following study emerged out of consideration of the category titled the Associated Meaning Context. This project was undertaken to understand more fully the relationship between awareness of private, subjective sensory and visual images—as was characterized by clients and therapists in the collaborative metaphor sequences—and the elaboration of metaphors.

Metaphor and Referential Activity

My goals for this project were twofold. First, given that psychotherapy is only one context of many in which metaphor generation has been associated with achieving a new insight or understanding, more general models of cognitive and perceptual processing should inform the investigation of modes of symbolic processing in therapy. Drawing on extant theories of cognitive processing would also guide the selection of assessment measures for inclusion in the study. The second aim of this project was to select assessment measures of metaphor ability and of experiential processing that would be adaptable to the assessment of individual differences in clients and therapists in future psychotherapy process studies.

For this study, Paivio's (1986) Dual Code model of cognitive functioning was selected as the theoretical framework in which the relationship between visual imagery and verbal metaphor would be conceptualized. In his theory, Paivio (1986) suggests that there are two functionally and structurally distinct representational systems. The verbal code is specialized for the representation and processing of language. The information is organized according to abstract properties and hierarchical orderings of a given category. An example of this mode of representation would be the following: A pine is a type of evergreen, which is a kind of tree, which is a form of vegetation, which is a part of the natural ecosystem.

The nonverbal code is involved in processing sensory experiences and imagery and is specialized for representing concrete properties of things. Drawing on the pine tree again, an example of this mode of representation would be the following: A pine feels prickly like a porcupine's quill; its smell and color remind me of the grassy meadow behind my cottage, after a summer rainstorm. The schemata of the nonverbal systems are built on experience and reflect shared perceptual properties of things, or sequences of events as they occur. Representations of things are connected because they occur in the same place at the same time, because they play interacting roles in the same event(s), or because they look, feel, or taste alike wherein one image evokes another through such connections. Ice and glass are associated because they are perceptually similar; that is, they are both shiny and clear. Bucci (1985), who has also drawn on the Dual Code model in her research, views emotional schemata as structures in the nonverbal system that are made up of elements of that code: visual and sensory images, representations of movement, and representations of visceral, bodily experience.

Paivio uses the term *referential processing* to depict the activation of one system by units in the other system. Evidence for referential processing is shown clearly in acts of reference such as providing names for objects and identifying objects by pointing to them. The ability to conjure up mental images to words is another example. Paivio has demonstrated empirically that these referential linkages are most direct for concrete words and their nonverbal representations.

In their research, Bucci and her colleagues have focused exclusively on the referential processing aspect of the dual coding model. They use the term *referential activity* (RA) to denote the degree to which the system of referential connections is involved in verbal and nonverbal representations. In a series of studies, Bucci (1985) examined individual differences in the activity of the system of referential connections and developed an externally rated performance measure of referential ability. Findings from these investigations suggest a correlation between high levels of RA and the use of vivid, metaphoric language.

Bucci and Freedman (1978) found that high-RA subjects—defined as those individuals who on the Stroop color-naming task (Stroop, 1935) gave the lowest reaction-time difference scores corrected for word reading time—exhibited more concrete, specific, and definite language in their 5-minute monologues. It was also noted that high-RA subjects were more likely to use vivid, metaphoric language in their descriptions of their

personal experiences. The Referential Activity Scale (Bucci, 1987) is a rating system that was designed to evaluate written or spoken text on those dimensions found to characterize the monologues of high-RA subjects. Accordingly, each text or rated unit is evaluated on the basis of four 10-point scales (concreteness, specificity, clarity, and imagery), and an overall RA score is generated by summing across the four scales.

In more recent studies, researchers have examined the relationship between the Referential Activity Scale and other conceptually related variables. Ellenhorn (1986) found a significant positive correlation between RA language style in a 5-minute monologue and subjective experience of imagery based on a self-report measure of vividness of mental imagery. In a related study, Eichan and Ellenhorn (1988) found a positive relationship between focused voice quality (Rice & Kerr, 1986) and referential activity (Bucci, 1985). They suggest that the inward deployment of attention in focusing relates to the process of accessing nonverbal material and representing it verbally.

Bucci (1987) speculates that the Dual Code model might be an appropriate theoretical framework for explaining deep structural change in psychodynamic therapy and psychoanalysis. In essence, she suggests that high-RA clients have greater facility for entering into an experiential mode such that they are able to focus attention on and verbally articulate sensory and visual images. Accordingly, metaphor, which effects a transaction between differing contexts or representational systems, may be viewed as a type of referential processing. Bucci hypothesizes that, where referential linkage is sparse or inactive, the verbal and nonverbal systems retain the modes of organization intrinsic to their own schemata. Where referential linkage is active, on the other hand, the schemata of the two systems will interact. It is in the context of this referential process, in which visual images and emotional schemata are articulated within the context of the verbal code, that metaphor is thought to play a vital role in therapy.

Accordingly, to examine empirically the relationship between individual differences in RA ability, metaphor ability, visual imagery, and styles of experiential attunement, a two-part laboratory study was undertaken with undergraduates as participants. To date, we have collected data from 75 subjects (56 women, 19 men) and are at the point of organizing and transcribing our research protocols for further rating and analysis. As this exploratory study was part of a larger collaborative project, only those measures that pertained to my focal interests will be indicated here.

The first testing session entailed the completion, in a group format, of a variety of paper and pencil measures to evaluate the participants on a range of cognitive and perceptual style dimensions. Awareness of experiential processes and sensory images was assessed by two self-report measures: the Openness to Experience Scale (McCrae & Costa, 1985) and the Vividness of Visual Imagery Questionnaire (Marks, 1972). Attentional style was assessed by means of the Tellegen Absorption Scale (Tellegen & Atkinson, 1974). Metaphor ability was evaluated using the Symbolic Equivalences Test (Barron, 1969), which measures an individual's capacity to generate original metaphors in relation to five stimulus images. The Advanced Vocabulary Test (French, Estrom, & Price, 1963) was also given to assess whether or not differences in word knowledge correlated with adequacy of metaphor productions.

In the second and final session, each participant met individually with a same-sex research assistant and was requested to complete two tasks. The first task was a modified version of a metaphor production test, originally developed by Hunt and Popham (1987). An adaptation of the *I Ching* (Wing, 1979), this task requires the integration of two disparate metaphor phrases to form an integrated whole. The participants were requested to think aloud as they completed the task, and all performances were audiotaped for future analyses. A qualitative rating manual (Grant, Hunt, & Angus, 1990), based on the original work of Hunt and Popham, was used to analyze the research protocols.

Referential activity was assessed on the basis of three, 5-minute, audiotaped monologues in which the participant was asked to describe a vivid, or memorable, relationship event with a parent, a friend, and another significant relationship. The monologues were transcribed and assessed for RA using Bucci's (1987) Referential Activity Scale. Training in the use of this rating system is under way, and a comprehensive training manual for the four RA scales has been completed. Using monologues rated by Bucci and her colleagues as a criterion, one judge in our training program has demonstrated good levels of reliability for all four scales: concreteness (Pearson $r = .93$), specificity ($r = .87$), clarity ($r = .93$), and imagery ($r = .93$). The next step is to develop adequate levels of interrater agreement between this rater and others in our training program.

In summary, there is empirical evidence to suggest that absorption and openness to inner experience appear to be elements of a cognitive style of attending to the experience in a focused manner. This attentional ability and the creation of a cognitive space, where one can focus

on visual images and internal experiencing, may relate positively to vividness of visual imagery, referential processing, and metaphor generation. Once we have completed data collection, a correlational analysis will be undertaken to explore the extent of the interrelationship between these cognitive style factors and metaphor-generation ability.

The Metaphoric Communication Interaction

The second core category that emerged from the qualitative analysis, described earlier, was titled the Metaphoric Communication Interaction. This category represented the dyadic style of communication and was based on the occurrence of either conjunction or disjunction in the client's and therapist's joint understanding of a given moment in therapy (hereafter referred to as "meaning conjunction" or "meaning disjunction"). Whether the members of a dyad produced a meaning conjunction or disjunction seemed to depend on whether or not a discovery-oriented, collaborative style of engagement had been established in the relationship. An atmosphere of collaboration and discovery stimulated both participants to share their personally held meanings regarding the metaphor, which in turn facilitated the development of a mutually constructed understanding of the phrase, ie., meaning conjunction. Conversely, the absence of a collaborative mode mitigated a sharing of personal associations to the metaphor and potentiated a meaning disjunction. The following metaphor episode exemplifies the properties associated with collaborative interactions.

The metaphor sequence titled "like a little child" began when a therapist asked his client, "Why are you so touchy about the subject of the neglected kid?" In the inquiry interview, when the therapist reflected upon why he had asked the question, he recalled, "I want her to come up with it, [not] impose it upon her; [to have her] try to understand what of her past experience may be contributing to her current perceptions and reactions." He further recalled that he had anticipated that the client probably would not make the connection between her current outrage about a known instance of child neglect and her own past as an abused child. As he said, "I think eventually I had to tell her anyway; I don't think she put it together herself." It was with great surprise that he learned, during the tape replay in the inquiry, that the client did in fact answer his question in the session. She had stated, "Because I know what it's like to be a neglected child." Upon hearing this response, the therapist remarked, "Isn't that interesting; I didn't think she got it on her own; I thought I had to tell her." He then recalled that this connection between her having been a neglected child and her current feelings about mother-child relationships had been discussed before, but that it had been "more intellectual; it wasn't nearly as arousing in the therapy as this was."

From the client's perspective, the therapist's question had been "expectable" and even anticipated during the session.

> I knew he was going to ask me the question (pause). You see, I didn't tell him that 'cause I didn't want to spoil it for him (pause). I had the feeling like, I know the next question he's going to ask me is "How come you feel this way about neglected kids?" I knew it; I could feel it.

For her, the therapist's ensuing confirmation of the correctness of her answer ("Darn right that's the reason") had been an important sign. As she said in the inquiry interview, "It made me feel like I was right for once in my life; made me feel more confident that at least I've got brains."

During the inquiry, the therapist recalled that, at this moment in the session, he had begun to synthesize the general theme of the client as the neglected child with another theme. The second theme was the circumstance of the violent daydream that she had discussed earlier in the session. He had found himself thinking,

> "My God, I'm going to give her a very complex interpretation; a long, complex interpretation and I think she's going to understand it." I was kind of amazed as I was talking that I could be making such a complicated interpretation to this patient.

This juncture in the collaborative sequence marked the emergence of the metaphor. It began with the therapist reminding the client of a daydream that she had previous to the therapy session, in which she angrily destroyed the therapist's office. The therapist remarked: "You see, you had a daydream before you came here and in the daydream you come in here and act like a little child."

The client then interrupted the therapist and elaborated his remark with the comment: "And I took a temper tantrum." The therapist repeated this remark. The client then added, "And I started screaming and hollering at you; the thing is I wanted you to help me." The therapist then incorporated the client's co-elaboration of the "like a little child"

analogy and extended the scope of the metaphoric transfer to the therapeutic relationship itself:

> And you act like a neglected child, and the question you are asking me in the daydream was, would I pay attention to a neglected child; would I pay attention to you; would I take you seriously or, if you're a pill or if you have a temper tantrum, whether I would neglect you the way you have been neglected in the past when you were a kid.

During the inquiry, the therapist was unable to recall exactly what he was thinking or feeling as he proceeded to "flesh out" his interpretation. He explained:

> When I make a complicated interpretation, I am almost in a dissociative state, and I'm kind of amazed myself sometimes the things that come out of my mouth, including puns, slips of the tongue, which have a big impact on me and the patient as they elaborate on what I'm trying to say.

In the inquiry, the client reported her reaction to the therapist's elaboration of the metaphoric implications of the daydream:

> It just made more sense than anything I could even think of, it just made more sense; I was just listening to him and I was recording it all in my head; it just fit where it should've fitted to begin with.

Furthermore, she stated that, as the therapist dwelt on the metaphor, she had experienced vivid, visual recollections of her experiences as an abused child. In addition, the therapist made a strong emotional impact on the client by focusing on her feelings about the therapeutic relationship:

> He gave me a feeling; in a way he showed me that I was wanted; I don't know if the word is "showing," "showed," or whatever; he was releasing a feeling of me being wanted. I don't know how to explain; he was describing me all over again. That's what he was doing; he was giving, showing me through him; he was wearing my shoes at that moment.

The client's experience regarding this metaphor was typical of her experience of other metaphors in the session. It was also representative of the experience of the second client in this study who engaged in a collaborative relationship with her therapist. Both clients described feeling as if the therapist understood them and experienced the

therapist's or analyst's words as successfully "embodying" and reflecting back their feelings. Both felt that they shared with the therapist a fully developed context of meaning regarding the use of certain metaphors spoken in the dialogue and anticipated that the therapist knew what they intended to mean during the session.

Moreover, the creative "dissociative state" described by the therapist as contributing to the "like a little child" metaphor was also reported by both participants in the second collaborative dyad. The client in this dyad described articulating her inner world "one word at a time," with little sense of where she had been headed until she had expressed herself fully. Similarly, her therapist likened the discovery process to that of translating from Greek to English, where the full meaning of the statement remains unknown until the entire sentence is completely transcribed.

In the foregoing example, the interactive, transactional nature of the collaborative therapeutic relationship is evident. Both the therapist and the client co-elaborated and co-constructed each other's interpretive statements such that there appeared to be a sharing and transaction between the meanings they attributed to the metaphoric scenario of the "little child." In essence, each participant's understanding of a particular event was transformed by the contributions of the other. As such, the final product of this co-constructive process represents neither the therapist's meaning nor the client's meaning but rather a cohesive synthesis and reorganization of both perspectives.

What can occur in a noncollaborative therapeutic interaction is reflected in "the litany" metaphor sequence selected from the first dyad interviewed for this study. In the inquiry interview, the client recalled that, during the metaphor sequence, she had been monitoring a series of vivid memories as the therapist had spoken in the session. The topic under discussion in the sequence was the nature of her relationship with her future mother-in-law. She recalled in the inquiry that, during the session, she had been remembering a conversation that she recently had with her fiancé's mother. Specifically, she stated, "I was thinking about her face in the car." This recollection in turn had led to another memory in which her future mother-in-law had made some obscure critical comments about her weight. Here the client indicated that "she [i.e., her future mother-in-law] tried to make it seem affectionate but it really bothered me." She described her immersion in tracking these imaginal recollections as "blanking out" from the immediate interaction with the therapist during the session. As she had not described the inner visual

images/memories to the therapist, he had remained unaware of their importance or meaning for her.

The therapist, on the other hand, indicated in the inquiry that, at that point in the metaphor sequence, the client had looked as if she had not understood what he had been talking about in the session. The therapist had then attempted to compensate for this perceived misunderstanding by repeating his statement.

From the perspective of the researcher, it would appear that many of the visual images and memories that the client had associated to the metaphors spoken in the session had been thematically linked to important relationship issues. In electing to withhold from her therapist the disclosure of these vivid recollections of images and memories, she had lost the opportunity to explore the full context of the meaning associated with this particular issue.

Perhaps more important, by not expressing the imaged memories, both the client and the therapist were denied the opportunity of co-constructing a new perspective on an old relationship problem. The articulation of her current experiencing/feelings in the therapy session within the imaged context of the recalled visual memories might have provided the opportunity for client and therapist alike to generate a shared, new understanding of a recurrent relationship problem.

I will now describe a research project that was developed to investigate empirically findings that emerged from the qualitative analyses of the Metaphor Communication Interaction.

Coding the Communication Interaction

A measure, titled the Interactional Coding System, emerged out of findings from the core category, the Metaphor Communication Interaction. The primary goal of this project was to develop a reliable method of identifying the occurrence of collaborative and noncollaborative interactions throughout a therapy session. A secondary aim of this study was to develop an external rating system such that both the client's and the therapist's statements and activities could be evaluated on the same criteria. One advantage of using a rating system for evaluating the therapeutic interaction is that it can be applied to transcripts of therapy sessions and does not require the arduous, in-depth analysis demanded by the qualitative approach. Additionally, judges can be trained in the use of the assessment measure to ascertain the reliability of their evaluations over time. A review of the extant research literature pertaining to the rating of clients' and therapists' activities/statements in sessions revealed that, in almost all instances, coding systems have been developed to characterize clients and therapists on dimensions/criteria thought to be of importance for a particular therapeutic orientation (e.g., transference interpretations, focused voice quality). Furthermore, with these rating systems, therapists and clients are assumed to be engaged in distinctly different kinds of activities during the therapy hour.

An example of this approach to evaluating the therapeutic interaction is a rating system titled the Sequential System for Coding Therapist Interventions and Client Responses (Marziali & Angus, 1986). This system was developed within a psychodynamic framework and drew upon the work by Malan (1980). It was designed specifically to target the relationship focus of the therapists' open-ended inquiries and interpretive statements. The system is summarized in Table 8.1.

It is evident that this rating system is based on the implicit assumption that the therapist's job is to provide direction and offer interventions in therapy while the client's job is to follow and respond. This assumption is challenged by the results of the qualitative study of the 11 metaphor episodes obtained from therapeutic orientations described earlier in this chapter. At different points in the verbal interaction, all clients and all therapists in this study were found to initiate topics, make interventions, and follow the lead of the other participant. Had the four sessions been rated with the Sequential Coding System, however, the activity and reflexivity (Rennie, 1990, this volume) of the clients would have been rendered invisible by the a priori decision to classify client statements as responses to therapists' interventions.

Accordingly, I set out to systematically revise the Sequential Coding System to delineate the interactive, co-constructive nature of the therapeutic dialogue. The current form of the Interactional Coding System (ICS; Angus, Slater, Paupst, & Marziali, 1990) represents a comprehensive measure whereby all client and therapist verbalizations are rated on the same criteria. More specifically, the system was developed to identify the kinds of activities that characterize patterns of client and therapist behaviors in collaborative and noncollaborative interactions, irrespective of therapeutic orientation. In the main, the categories address the level of speech acts in the immediate context of the therapy dialogue.

The 13 categories of the ICS represent three different types of codes. The first set of codes (1-4) focuses on types of actions initiated in the therapy session, ranging from giving advice and instructing the other

Table 8.1   A Sequential System for Coding Therapist Intervention and Client Responses (Marziali & Angus, 1986)

Therapist statements

   T1   therapist statements that address the therapeutic relationship

   T2   therapist statements that focus on the client's relationship with significant others

   T3   therapist statements that link patterns apparent in the therapeutic relationship with aspects of the client's relationship with significant others.

  TSC therapist statements that address aspects of the client's self-beliefs, self-concepts or self-experiences.

Client response to the therapist response

   C0   client offers no response

   C1   client agrees/accepts therapist statement

   C2   client responds in an ambivalent manner, "yes, but . . . "

   C3   client openly disagrees with therapist statement

   CF   client changes focus of the discussion

   Q   client questions therapist

   C   client requests further clarification from therapist

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participant to changing the topic of discussion and making summary statements:

1. Introduces shifts, or changes focus or topic
2. Reflects back statements or summarizes
3. Offers advice
4. Instructs other participant

The second set of codes (5-7) characterizes the participant's discussions of focal issues in terms of *point of view* (either focused outward on external events or inward on experiential states) and *level of analysis* (either descriptive or analytic and reflexive):

5. Descriptive elaboration of external events; personal/work relationships, episodes: focus on description of external events
6. Descriptive elaboration of subjective experience or point of view in response to an event or issue pertaining to self and relationship to others;

may include description of visual images, memories, points of view: focus on description of inner experiencing

7. Reflexive analysis or exploration regarding subjective state or relationship events with others: focus on achieving understanding/integration

The final set of codes (8-13) pertains to utterances that convey agreement or disagreement with the other participant's actions or points of view:

8. Expressed agreement with or acceptance of advice, instructions, and statement made by others
9. Expressed feelings of being heard or understood: "That's exactly what I was going through!"
10. Expressed partial agreement
11. Restatement of position or returning to previous topic of discussion
12. Rejection or disagreement with suggestions, interpretations, instructions, and so on
13. Expressed misunderstanding of feelings or being misunderstood or misrepresented/may request clarification from the other

In addition, the content of the relationship focus is coded separately for each statement made by the client or therapist in the following manner:

TH: statements that address the therapeutic relationships

SO: statements that focus on the client's relationship with significant others

SC: statements that address the client's self-concepts, self-beliefs, or self experiences

ST: statements that address the therapist's self-concepts, self-beliefs, or self-experiences

E: statements that describe external events or background material

The categories of the ICS require a low level of inference by the raters. Based on the rating of 210 meaning units from one psychotherapy session, an adequate level of interrater agreement (87%) was achieved after 30 hours of training. Application of an earlier version of the ICS to the four therapy sessions (Paupst, 1988), which formed the basis of my qualitative study of metaphor (Angus & Rennie, 1988, 1989),

yielded some interesting results: 60% of all topics introduced in the session were initiated by the client; clients initiated and/or provided 20% of all interpretive statements and 25% of all restatements and summarizations.

In a more recent pilot project (Slater & Angus, 1990), the ICS was used to analyze transcripts of the "Gloria films" with Rogers, Ellis, and Perls (Shostrom, 1966). Preliminary results from this analysis suggest that the ICS differentiates among these three therapeutic encounters. The percentages reported represent the frequency of occurrence of a particular code in the context of the total number of responses coded for a particular therapy session.

In terms of the first set of ICS actions (codes 1-4), it is apparent that, true to form, Rogers offers by far the greatest percentage of reflection/summarization responses (21% versus 2.9% for Ellis and 6.2% for Perls) while Perls concentrates on instructing Gloria (20% versus 7.2% for Ellis and 2.4% for Rogers) during the session. Overall, Perls's responses are coded most frequently as representative of the action codes (32%) followed by Rogers (27%) and Ellis (14%).

Although highest with Rogers (11% versus Ellis, 3% and Perls, 5.1%), it appears that, in general, Gloria's responses in the sessions receive far fewer action codes than do the therapists' responses. Given the agential focus of these codes, this result suggests that Gloria felt relatively constrained in asserting a measure of control in the therapy session. Perhaps this finding is not so surprising given the knowledge that Gloria was well aware that she was meeting with three renowned psychotherapists. Deference to the authority of the therapist (Rennie, 1990) was to be expected in this context.

The second set of ICS codes categorizes responses in terms of whether they provide a narrative description of (a) external events (code 5), (b) subjective experiences (code 6), or (c) reflexive/analytic inquiry (code 7) about the meaning of external events and subjective experiences. Overall, the narrative categories are the most frequently occurring codes for all three therapists (Rogers, 59%; Ellis, 44%; Perls, 45%). Of the three narrative categories, the reflexive/analytic focus is the most frequently occurring subcode (Rogers, 42%; Ellis, 35%; Perls, 29%), irrespective of therapeutic approach. In contrast, irrespective of therapist, approximately half of Gloria's responses in the sessions were categorized as focusing on the description and elaboration of inner subjective experiences.

The third set of ICS codes embrace an evaluative dimension in which responses are characterized as indicating either agreement (codes 8, 9) or disagreement (codes 10, 11, 12, 13) with the viewpoints of the other participant. It is interesting that Rogers offers fewer positive evaluative remarks (agreement 9% and disagreement 4%) than does Ellis (agreement 20% and disagreement 20%) while Perls delivers more disagreement responses (17%) than agreement responses (5%) during his session with Gloria. Ellis in fact offers more positive and negative evaluative responses than either Rogers or Perls.

Gloria in turn is rated as having a higher percentage of disagreement ratings (20%) and agreement ratings (28%) with Ellis than any other therapist. Congruent with the therapists' ratings, she is coded as having a relatively higher percentage of agreement (23%) versus disagreement (18%) responses with Rogers while the inverse relationship holds with Perls (agreement 5% and disagreement 28%).

A comparison of the pattern of content codes for the three therapists and Gloria reveals a marked symmetry between client and therapist in terms of issues discussed in the sessions. It may be of interest to note that, irrespective of therapeutic orientation, all three therapists focused predominantly on issues pertaining to Gloria's self-concept and beliefs about self within the context of a reflexive/analytic mode of inquiry. Ellis's responses are coded as centering on the issue of Gloria's beliefs and attitudes toward self 91% of the time, while Gloria's statements in her session with him are coded as belonging to this category 95% of the time. Ellis's heavy concentration on this content category is of course consistent with his rational-emotive therapeutic orientation. In contrast, 35% of Perls's responses address issues pertaining to his relationship with Gloria and 61% of his responses focusing on issues pertaining to her self-concept and beliefs about self. The emphasis on the client's experience of the therapeutic relationship is consistent with the here-and-now focus of Gestalt therapy. Gloria's statements in her session with Perls parallel the content focus established by Perls: 35% of her responses are coded as focusing on the therapeutic relationship and 61% of her responses are coded as focusing on aspects of her own self-beliefs and self-concepts.

Rogers in turn blends a focus on aspects of relationships with significant others (24%) with a centering on Gloria's beliefs and feelings about herself (59%). In interaction with Rogers, Gloria concentrates on aspects of her relationship with others 32% of the time and deals with

issues pertaining to her self-concept 60% of the time. From these data, it seems clear that, when interacting in the filmed sessions, Gloria was pulled into the unique therapeutic orbit of each of her three "star" therapists.

A fuller representation of the transactional, interactive nature of the therapeutic encounter would seem to be a promising direction for future research. The delineation of the narrative codes in particular may be of special interest for process researchers. In a recent study, Angus and Hardtke (1991) dealt exclusively with the narrative codes of the ICS and developed the Narrative Sequences Coding Manual. Using this manual, raters are able to subdivide and characterize a complete therapy session according to three narrative sequence codes (subjective/experiential description, description of external events, and reflexive analyses of current or past events). This coding system in turn allows researchers to unitize sessions according to narrative type irrespective of therapeutic modality. Accordingly, both the frequency of narrative codes as well as their patterns of occurrence within the sessions can be traced.

Utilizing sessions according to type of narrative sequence may also allow for a more precise, appropriate use of external rating systems that have been developed to measure different aspects of the therapy process. For instance, the Experiencing Scale (Klein, Mathieu-Coughlan, & Kiesler, 1986) could be used to rate the depth of experiencing for the internal narrative sequences while the Referential Activity Scale (Bucci, 1987) could be applied to evaluate the quality of verbal expression associated with the narrative sequences focusing on descriptions of external events. Such an approach to process research would not give primacy to either the experiential emphasis of the Experiencing Scale or the psychodynamic underpinnings of the Referential Activity Scale. Instead, it would allow the researcher to trace the contribution made by both types of description to the therapy discourse. In this regard, the Narrative Sequences Coding System may prove to be a useful tool for furthering our understanding of what is common to the therapy experience, irrespective of therapeutic techniques or modalities.

Summary and Conclusions

I have presented an overview of the development of my concurrent research interests in metaphor and the therapeutic communication interaction. The studies were undertaken to explore trends that emerged

from the intensive, qualitative analysis of a limited number of metaphor sequences. With this multimethodological approach, I have attempted to draw on the strengths of both the qualitative and the quantitative research paradigms in furthering our understanding of the role metaphorical thinking plays in developing insight about our conceptions of self and others.

By understanding more fully the role that individual difference variables such as attunement to subjective experience, imagery awareness, and cognitive complexity play in the ability to generate metaphors and express oneself verbally, we may in turn be able to develop more precise training models for novice therapists. Additionally, we still know very little about how individual metaphor phrases come to symbolize shared contexts of meaning over the course of a complete therapy. The qualitative inquiry into selected metaphor events throughout the course of a short-term therapy relationship would in part address this gap.

Furthermore, it would seem that the construal of the psychotherapy interaction as a form of narrative expression holds special promise for psychotherapy practitioners and researchers alike. While there is currently much theoretical debate about narrative and the construction of meaning (Bruner, 1990; Sarbin, 1986; Spence, 1982; White & Epston, 1990) in psychotherapy, few empirical studies have tried to address systematically these issues in the context of psychotherapy process research. To this end, an investigation of the relationship between verbal expressiveness, metaphor use, and narrative types in productive therapy sessions might make an important contribution to an understanding of how our clients reconfigure their life stories.

In addition, based on the findings of the qualitative research program, some tentative recommendations for psychotherapy practice and process research can be put forward. In terms of understanding how clients and therapists generate metaphors, it is apparent that the experience of apprehending an initial, immediate flood of varied imagistic and emotional associations often precedes the act of conceptualizing meanings for metaphors. Furthermore, returns from the inquiry interview method suggest that the simple act of verbally describing privately experienced images, recollections, and feelings leads participants to a fuller awareness of felt emotions and implicit beliefs about self and others.

In another aspect, in the collaborative dyads, the metaphors generated by the clients and therapists resonate with their inner experiencing during the therapy sessions. It is during these moments that metaphoric communication most clearly resembles a spontaneous self-discovery process. In

contrast to the psychotherapy research literature, however, which tends to focus on the client's creativity, it is both the clients and the therapists in the collaborative dyads who describe being engaged in a spontaneous process of creative self-discovery during the metaphor sequences. The therapist's role in this creative process is to model the highlighting and prizing of inner experiences as a way of fostering self-discovery. Accordingly, supervisors might be well advised to encourage novice therapists to be aware of their own experiential reactions during therapy sessions and to use this awareness as a vehicle for discovery about themselves as well as their clients. As suggested by one collaborative therapist in the study, the imaginal associations evoked in the listener by a spoken metaphor might best be understood as a co-construction of the descriptors contained in the phrase combined with idiosyncratic, private associations of the listener. In terms of psychotherapy, a stance of critical self-awareness may be the only safeguard a therapist has against the inappropriate and perhaps damaging expression of countertransferential responses to clients.

Even in response to hackneyed metaphors, therapists should never automatically assume that they share a common understanding or meaning of a phrase with their clients. It is striking how often therapists and clients have distinctly different private imaginal representations of the same metaphor spoken in a session. In fact, misunderstandings between clients and therapists typically occur in those metaphor sequences in which either one or both participants have incorrectly assumed that they are drawing upon a shared context of meaning (Angus & Rennie, 1988).

Finally, the participants' ready ability and willingness to collaborate with the researcher in the inquiry interviews, and to provide elaborations of their experiences evoked by the metaphors, would seem to provide a model for what potentially could take place within the therapeutic relationship itself. It is in this sense that the collaborative exploration of spontaneously generated metaphors would seem to provide a promising context for discovery that cuts across psychotherapeutic genres and treatment approaches.

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