

CLINICAL METAPHOR-TELLING:
COUNSELLORS' INTENTIONS, BELIEFS AND EXPERIENCE

by

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CLINICAL METAPHOR-TELLING: COUNSELLORS' INTENTIONS,

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Abstract

This study was a phenomenological investigation of counsellors' intentions and beliefs for telling metaphors to their clients. Five professional counsellors participated in stimulated recall interviews of their audiotaped counselling sessions by responding to questions regarding their intentions for using metaphor, their experiential process preceding their telling of metaphor, and their speculations as to the efficacy of the metaphors they told their clients.

My analysis of counsellors' intentions revealed four categories of metaphor. Joining metaphors were used to communicate empathy and comfort. Reframing metaphors were used to provide an alternate conceptualization of a client's situation that counsellors either wished their clients to accept(positive reframing metaphor) or understand as metaphorical to their situation and discontinue the behavior being depicted(negative reframing metaphor). With leading metaphors counsellors first established an isomorphic relationship between the metaphor and the client's problem and then introduced an entirely new behavior or understanding to the client through the metaphor. With advising metaphors the counsellors matched the themes of the client's situation in an abstract metaphor with little effort to establish emotional or behavioral isomorphism.

My analysis revealed two styles of mental process in metaphor-telling. In the reflective process counsellors were consciously aware of an intention to intervene, and deliberately constructed and told a metaphor to realize that intention. In the pre-reflective process the metaphor emerged in the counsellor's consciousness and was immediately spoken.

Counsellors' speculations revealed five clinical areas in which they used metaphors and considered them to be effective: 1. avoidance of client resistance; 2. disruption of engrained behavior patterns; 3. promotion of self-awareness; 4. stimulation of unconscious processes; 5. elicitation of experiential responding.

The discussion examined the significance of the two different styles of mental process in metaphor-telling with reference to counsellor intention. A conceptual distinction was made between counsellors' beliefs about the effectiveness of metaphor and their intentions for telling metaphors.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Fifteen years ago a friend told me a story of a woman who bred and showed dogs professionally. Upon hearing of the death of her husband of 25 years she exclaimed, "Damn, I just lost my best dog trainer!" What a poignant and humorous example, I thought, of how career goals can become the measure of all things in one's life.

Many years later a man sat in my counselling office telling me how he felt caught between the demands of his family and career. Both were equally important to him but he could not spend more time with one without sacrificing his commitment to the other. After telling his story he sat looking perplexed and hopeless. As I sat with him the story of the dog breeder came to mind and I shared it with him. He laughed, fell silent, teared, and began to express his sadness at the emotional tension between him and his wife that started when he earned a job promotion that kept him at work on the weekends. Two months later in his last counselling session with me, he said that my story of the dog breeder had been the most influential words I had spoken to him.

Edward Murray (1975), a phenomenological psychologist, wrote that metaphor is a powerful strategy for the articulation of human problems and life solutions. Psychotherapy is a communal search for the appropriate metaphors that bespeak a person's

life in a given situation, in a given context. And it is a search for new metaphors that will enable the person to incorporate the disparate, the atypical, the incongruous, the paradoxical, and maybe even the contradictory of his or her life in a humanly respectable, vitally liberating and aesthetically uplifting manner (Murray, 1975).

Counsellors have always used imagery in stories to influence their clients just as artists have always used imagery in poetry or prose to influence the experience of their readers. There seems to be something essentially human about communicating ideas and experiences in this way. We all know from personal experience that stories can be an engaging, memorable, and effective way of communicating in any field of human endeavor where the exchange of ideas is important.

In the last ten years interest in the clinical use of metaphor has grown. This interest is reflected in the increase of publication of articles and monographs by researchers and practitioners who are turning their attention toward metaphor as it occurs in counselling dialogue. One cannot attend a counsellors' conference this year without a workshop or two on metaphor or storytelling. Metaphor-telling is fast becoming an area of expertise in the field of counselling psychology.

Definition of metaphor

A metaphor is a pattern of communication comprised of any of the following: words, images, symbols, emotions, postures, and physical actions. Such a pattern is a metaphor when it is used as a means by which to understand one experience in terms of another. In metaphor two contexts of meaning interact with one another to produce emergent metaphorical meaning. Each context of meaning is a system of facts, experiences, associations, and implications (Johnson, 1980). The interaction involves a mutual influence of one system of meanings upon the other to create not an intersection of two systems, but a new system of meaning that did not exist before. Humans make metaphors and by doing so create the meaning structures which determine our social reality (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

For a story, anecdote, or other figurative language form to be defined as metaphor, it must be contextually anomalous (Ortony, 1980). That is, the metaphor does not "fit" in the conversation in a literal sense; it is a sudden shift to a new context, a new system of facts, experiences and associations. A literal interpretation of the metaphor fails to fit in the meaning context, i.e., the conversation. It is not the linguistic expressions themselves that are metaphors, but particular uses of them (Ortony, 1980).

Clinical metaphor-telling

Contextual anomaly is the defining characteristic of what has often been called 'therapeutic metaphor' (cf. Gordon, 1978; Barker, 1985). It is this characteristic that differentiates 'therapeutic metaphor' from counsellors' instrumental use of metaphor in counselling dialogue to illustrate or make a point with a client. The latter use of metaphor by counsellors rarely involves a contextual shift to a new system of facts, experiences and associations, is most commonly a matter of a few words or a brief phrase, and might be more properly regarded as 'figurative language' metaphor (cf. Barlow, Pollio & Fine, 1977; Rice, 1965, 1973). It is the contextually anomalous metaphor-telling, characterized by the use of stories, anecdotes and analogies, in particular the counsellors' intentions, beliefs and experience of telling this type of metaphor, that is examined in this study.

Another of the defining features of clinical metaphors is that they are isomorphic to the client's situation. Isomorphism has been described in a number of different ways. Gordon (1978) said a story is isomorphic when the problem and patterns of interaction are equivalent to those of the client. Lankton and Lankton (1983) emphasize the 'matching' of the metaphor to the themes of the client's life. In a family therapy context de Shazer (1982) employed a definition of isomorphism as two complex structures mapped onto each other in such a way that to each part of one structure there is a corresponding part in the

other structure, where "corresponding" means that the two parts play similar roles in their respective structures.

Isomorphism is essential to clinical metaphor. Without the matching of themes and structure between the client's situation and the metaphor, the metaphor is irrelevant. Erickson, Rossi and Rossi (1976) hypothesized that metaphor activates unconscious association patterns in the client. Patterns of interaction in the metaphor that are similar to patterns of interaction in the client's life are considered more likely to stimulate unconscious associations in the client's unconscious. Erickson and Rossi implied that a metaphor without isomorphism would not initiate a client search for meaning.

Milton Erickson, a clinical hypnotist, used stories as an indirect method of presenting ideas and suggestions to help clients consider their problems from a different, more productive frame of reference. Erickson described his story-telling as two-level communication in which he used words with multiple connotations and associations so that a client's mind receives communication at one level while the unconscious mind processes other meanings from the words (Erickson & Rossi, 1979). This appears to be a defining feature of all clinical metaphors: at one level the counsellor is occupying or fixating the client's attention with a story that is usually interesting or entertaining; at another level the counsellor is stimulating a client search for new meanings or associations or suggesting a new meaning for the client.

Lankton and Lankton (1983) conceptualized metaphor as a way of helping people utilize acquired skills to solve their problems. The counsellor helps the client access these skills and to associate them with the current problem. In the Lankton's model, metaphors are used to (a) match the themes of the client's life, (b) elicit emotional and cognitive resources the client needs to be more effective, and (c) to embed suggestions that address the client's symptoms (Matthews & Dardeck, 1985). The "matching" metaphor is used to establish trust and rapport with the client by showing understanding for the social situation or context in which the problem has occurred and in which the solutions have been tried. The "resource" metaphor helps the client gain access to the resources needed to solve his or her problem. It can be a story completely separate from the matching metaphor and intended to stimulate the client's ability to solve the presenting problem. The "directing" metaphor presents direct, positive suggestions in the context of the story (Matthews & Dardeck, 1985).

Intention

An intention is conscious purpose. It is the act of conceiving an action or state of affairs while in a state of readiness to do something that will directly or indirectly bring about its realization.

Intention refers to whatever event or complex of events is the proximate causal antecedent to action. Brand (1984) divides

the cognitive component of intention into two parts: prospective intention and immediate intention. Prospective intention is a plan; it is the representation of a person's past actions, current situation, and future actions. Immediate intention is the monitoring and guidance of ongoing action, i.e., bodily movement. One is a prospective representation of the course of action and the other is a detailed pattern of representations for specific bodily movements. The first concerns the person's plan for action and remains basically stable throughout the activity; the second is the basis for feedback and correction during the course of the plan, and thus changes as the plan proceeds. There are several parts to the forming of a prospective intention. A person's desire for something is combined with his or her background beliefs, character and personality traits, emotional state, physiological and psychological needs, and the conditions in the environment in which this process is occurring to bring about intention which then yields overt action (Brand, 1984).

This understanding of human intention derives from 'folk psychology' (Brand, 1984). Mental events are antecedent to, and determine human action. This study is an exploration of the thinking of counsellors that precedes and accompanies a specific kind of human action: clinical metaphor-telling.

The research problem

Various clinicians have reported on the clinical use of metaphors and the intentions for their use (Zeig, 1980; Lenrow, 1966). At issue is the implicit and explicit purposive use of metaphor by clinicians. The assumption developed in this study is that a counsellor's actions are determined by his or her intentions, that metaphors are an expression of intentions within a professional helping relationship. The general question is: what is the nature of counsellor intentions behind clinical metaphor? This is a study of counsellors acting within the context of their professional responsibility to effect psychotherapeutic change. Consequently the focus is on counsellor intentions for client behaviors. The research question is: when counsellors tell metaphors what do they intend for their clients to do, think, or feel? This research question is addressed in Chapter 4.

The second issue this research addresses is the question of clinical impact: how and when are metaphors helpful as counselling interventions? The effectiveness of metaphor has been conceptualized in terms of stimulating a client search for new meanings or associations (Erickson & Rossi, 1979; Evans, 1985; Lenrow, 1966) and in terms of modifying one's current metaphors to achieve a new understanding which guides one's experience and action (Evans, 1985; Santostefano, 1984). Other writers (Angus & Rennie, 1988, 1989) indicate that the effectiveness of metaphor, which evolves from the dialogue

between counsellor and client, is instrumental in the development of client insight.

The importance of isomorphism in the efficacy of metaphor has been advanced by Lankton and Lankton (1983), and Gordon (1978). Clinicians have also emphasized the effectiveness of metaphor as indirect communication capable of bypassing client conscious resistance (Erickson & Rossi, 1979) and metaphor as a means of stimulating a client's experiential resources that are needed to facilitate change (Lankton, 1985). The question of the clinical impact of metaphor in counselling is addressed in Chapter 5.

Clinicians have conceptualized the occurrence of counsellor told metaphor in two different ways. Some have emphasized the careful planning and delivery of stories (Barker, 1985; Gordon, 1978; Lankton & Lankton, 1986). Others have emphasized an extemporaneous style of metaphor construction and delivery that occurs when the counsellor is receptive to the client's unconscious process (Brooks, 1985) or when the metaphor evolves from the ongoing dialogue between counsellor and client, i.e., a coconstructed metaphor (Angus & Rennie, 1988, 1989). Few researchers have examined the counsellor's experience of metaphor-telling. The general question is: what is the nature of the counsellor's mental process when telling metaphors? The research questions are: what is the counsellor's description of his own mental process? Where do the metaphors come from? Are metaphors created or remembered? These questions are addressed

in Chapter 6.

This study is concerned only with the counsellors intentions, beliefs, and experience of metaphor-telling and not with the clients comprehension of these events. The comprehension by and significance of metaphor for the client is not empirically investigated in this study. The experience of the client, the one to whom the metaphor is being told, is addressed only from the perspective of the counsellor as a matter of speculation and in my own speculations on the effectiveness of metaphor-telling.

This study is phenomenological and approaches metaphor-telling from the perspective of the counsellor. It is the counsellor who invests metaphor-telling with meaning and this study seeks to render a description and understanding of this meaning making. It is the counsellors' intentions, beliefs, and experience as reported in their descriptions that formed the basis for an interpretive phenomenological account of metaphor-telling.

Scope of the study

This investigation of clinical metaphor-telling proceeds from the assumption that counsellors are intentional in their metaphor-telling. This assumption is manifested in the methodology of the study. The questions in the Stimulated Recall Interview (see Chapter 3) which structured the information elicited from counsellors in this study led the counsellors to

reply in a manner consistent with the foregoing assumption. Other conceptualizations of counselling process, for example, counsellor as participant in an interactive or collaborative discourse, were not discouraged if they emerged in the Interviews, but the structured Interview questions did not encourage counsellors to speak from that perspective.

The a priori assumption that counsellors are intentional in their metaphor-telling imposes limitations on the findings of the study. Presupposing that counsellors are intentional influences the way in which I will interpret the counsellors' descriptions. The risk is that I will interpret only in a way that confirms my assumption. Alternate interpretations may not emerge because I am not "open" to them. Given this consideration the present study must be considered one that is limited to a description only of the *intentional* metaphor-telling of counsellors.

All of the counsellors in this study were influenced by Strategic and Ericksonian counselling models. Their work with clients is characterized by directive counselling, wherein the counsellor assumes responsibility for the direction and focus of counselling. The analysis and description in this study (see Chapter 3) is based on the verbal reports of the participating counsellors. The findings of the study reflect the theoretical orientation and clinical practice of the counsellors. Consequently, my conclusions reflect the theoretical framework of directive counselling in general and Strategic theory and

Ericksonian thinking in particular.

These considerations point out the limited scope of the present study. While metaphors are used by counsellors from various theoretical orientations, this study is concerned only with the metaphor-telling of directive counsellors. Clinicians using non-directive approaches have conceptualized metaphor use from other theoretical perspectives (cf. Angus & Rennie, 1988, 1989). The findings and conclusions of this study describe one way of using metaphor and may be limited to and apply only to the theory and practice of directive counselling.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) wrote about the power of metaphor in human thinking and communication. They found that metaphors structure the ordinary conceptual system of our culture which is reflected in our everyday language, and the kinds of everyday activities we perform. In all aspects of life we define our reality in terms of metaphors and then proceed to act on the basis of those metaphors. We draw inferences, set goals, make commitments, and execute plans, all on the basis of how we in part structure our experience, consciously and unconsciously, by means of metaphor.

Lakoff and Johnson stress the role of metaphorical thinking in our understanding of our world. We understand one kind of experience in terms of another. Experiences determine the categories of our conceptual system. Similarities exist and can be experienced only relative to a conceptual system. The primary function of metaphor is to provide a partial understanding of one kind of experience in terms of another kind of experience.

New metaphors have the power to create a new reality. This happens when we start to comprehend our experience in terms of a new metaphor, and it becomes a deeper reality when we begin to act in terms of it. If a new metaphor enters the conceptual system that we base our actions on, it will alter that conceptual system and the perceptions and actions to which the

system gives rise. The power of metaphor is that it can create a reality rather than simply give us a way of conceptualizing a pre-existing reality.

Lakoff and Johnson's position challenges the traditional view of metaphor as a matter of mere language rather than as a means of structuring our conceptual system and the kinds of everyday activities we perform. They claim the realist position leaves out human aspects of reality, in particular the real perceptions, conceptualizations, motivations, and actions that constitute most of what we experience. What is real for an individual as a member of a culture is a product both of their social reality and of the way in which that shapes their experience of the physical world. Since much of our social reality is understood in metaphorical terms, and since our conception of the physical world is partly metaphorical, metaphor plays a very significant role in determining what is real for us.

New metaphors make sense of our experience in the same way conventional metaphors do: they provide coherent structure. Lakoff and Johnson believe metaphors can sanction actions, justify inferences, and help us set new goals. The meaning a metaphor will have for an individual will be partly culturally determined and partly tied to the individual's past experiences.

In his discussion of the role of metaphor in personality development, Santostefano (1985) defined metaphor as a pattern

which might include images, symbols, words, emotions, postures, and physical actions which condenses, conserves and represents experiences. In addition to representing past experiences, metaphors construe present situations and prescribe particular actions and emotions to handle them. Santostefano (1984) describes an evolving process whereby a metaphor results in a new understanding which guides further experience and action, which then modifies the original metaphor. The modified metaphor results in a new view and different actions and the cycle repeats. Like Lakoff and Johnson (1980), Santostefano has written of the power of metaphor to influence, organize and prescribe action.

Metaphors in counselling

Lenrow's (1966) speculation on the functions of metaphor in psychotherapy remains one of the better summations in the theoretical literature. He outlined seven general uses of therapist spoken metaphors:

- 1) the therapist models the trying out of novel understandings;
- 2) metaphors simplify events into a schema or concept that emphasizes some properties;
- 3) the concrete referents in metaphors make for intimate or personal communication;
- 4) metaphors are playful and allow the therapist to speak about intimate characteristics of the client without appearing intrusive;
- 5) metaphor is used to reveal the affective equivallence of

dissimilar concepts or words;

6) metaphor is used to highlight social roles that a client takes in his world;

7) metaphor is used to connote relational properties (structure, function, effects, affects) between two different situations and therefore is useful in transferring learning.

Zeig (1980) compiled a general categorization of the various uses of metaphorical anecdotes by the psychotherapist Milton Erickson:

1. to illustrate a point with a client,
2. to suggest solutions to the client's problem,
3. to develop a client's awareness of their problem,
4. to seed ideas and increase motivation,
5. to control the relationship therapeutically,
6. to make suggestions, in the context of a story, that the client would otherwise challenge or disregard,
7. to decrease the conscious resistance of the client,
8. to reframe or redefine the problem,
9. ego building,
10. modeling a creative, flexible way of communicating and living,
11. reminding people of their resources,
12. desensitizing people from their fears,
13. create confusion and promote hypnotic responsiveness,
14. establish rapport and demonstrate empathy.

Milton Erickson (Erickson, Rossi & Rossi, 1976) explained his use of analogies, metaphors and humor as communication on two levels: the conscious and the unconscious. An analogy can appeal to the conscious mind and at the same time refer to deeply engrained associations, mental mechanisms and learned patterns of behavior, activating these internal responses and making them available for problem solving. Suggestions made by analogy are thus a powerful and indirect twofold approach that mediates between the conscious and unconscious. Appropriate analogies appeal to the conscious mind because of their inherent interest while mobilizing the resources of the unconscious by many processes of association.

In Evans' (1988) phenomenological approach to metaphor in psychotherapy he viewed the client as an epistemically active being who is constantly creating the world in which he or she lives, either consciously by reflecting on and interpreting his or her experience or by default via frozen life metaphors. Evans suggests that a client's perspective is framed by metaphor-like structures that exist as part of the personality. These structures "exist" only in the sense of giving experience a characteristic form, which cannot be detected apart from experience. These metaphorical structures resemble archetypes since they are largely unconscious, operate in broad spheres of one's experience, and provide a general form to consciousness.

Evans gives a clinical example of a client whose self-declared life metaphor was "I am a rock". This metaphor

functioned as an implicit aspect of her personal identity such that it structured the experience of her physical, emotional, and social existence, i.e., she was independent and invulnerable in a manner which isolated her. As her counsellor Evans worked to alter the rock metaphor by promoting insight into self-concept and behavior patterns, and by proposing an altered metaphor, i.e., sand, which shared the strength, durability and mass of rock but was flexible and vulnerable to external forces. Evans declared his work was guided by the belief that such life metaphors contain the seeds of their own transformation which can be catalysed by the right kind of attention.

Evans (1985) found in his dissertation research that some metaphors are more likely to stimulate the kind of mental activity associated with therapeutic work and individuals who are open to their primary mental processes tend to respond to metaphors at a deeper level. Evans own metaphor for describing his approach is forming a bridge to the client's world and seeing the unrealized possibilities within it. The bridge is erected from the metaphors of both the therapist and the client.

In a clinical case report, Brooks (1985) described his own use of metaphors with children. He saw client's use of metaphor as both an indirect, less threatening way of communicating emotionally charged issues, and as potent conveyors of the client's hopes, fears, questions, struggles, and styles of coping that pertain to their lives, to their therapy, and to their therapist.

Brooks also claims metaphors can create a productive climate of understanding. He prefers the metaphors are those of the client, but a therapist tuned into a client's inner phenomenal world can introduce metaphors that will immediately communicate a rich level of understanding. It was Brooks experience that when he tells a metaphor that resonates with the client's inner world the client will use and modify his metaphors so they become their own. Brooks believes metaphors influence and are, in turn, influenced by information in the child's internal and external worlds resulting in a more advanced and sophisticated level of cognitive and affective functioning.

There are relatively few empirical studies reported in the literature that examine therapist offered metaphors in psychotherapy sessions. Most of the research on therapists intentions for telling metaphors has been theoretical and/or case studies. Most of the recent research on figurative language and metaphor in psychotherapy examines either client use of language (cf. Barlow, Pollio & Fine, 1977; McMullin, 1985; Nye, 1985) or client and therapist metaphor production (Angus & Rennie, 1988, 1989; Amira, 1982; Brooks, 1985).

Angus and Rennie (1988, 1989) conducted a systematic exploratory study of how therapists and clients construct, express, and apprehend metaphors. The authors used Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) definition of metaphor as verbal expression and cognitive structuring which invokes a transaction between differing contexts of meaning and construct systems. The

metaphors examined in their study were not contextually anomalous stories or anecdotes. They were conversational exchanges in which either counsellor or client introduced a metaphor (e.g. client as "ogre") and this metaphor became a theme around which the counsellor and client dialogued and explored associations and developed insights.

In an interpersonal process recall procedure clients and therapists were interviewed about their moment to moment experience as metaphors were being produced in psychotherapy sessions. All metaphor sequences evolved by means of an interactive dialogue between client and therapist. The authors distinguished between two different process styles. In 'meaning conjunction' the therapist and client collaboratively elaborated their metaphors. The therapist's curiosity about the client's associations to a metaphor made the client even freer to share their covert world. Both therapist and client were simultaneously attuned to their own experiential responses. They discovered what they were going to say as they spoke.

'Meaning disjunction' metaphoric communication was characterized by the therapist conducting what the authors described as Socratic dialogue designed to stimulate the clients to identify what the therapists had already decided was "true" of a particular situation or set of issues. Both therapists and clients were less likely to articulate the covert, experiential responses to the metaphor spoken in the dialogue.

In Angus and Rennie's second publication of the same research project (1989) they articulated an understanding of metaphoric expression in psychotherapy. Their qualitative analysis of the participants' accounts revealed that each metaphoric expression was embedded in an associated context of meaning. This meaning context appeared to operate like a gestalt in which a network of related visual images, memories, and emotional responses were evoked by the spoken metaphor. They found three organizing principles structured the relationship between a metaphor and the underlying meaning context: it served as an associative link to other elements of the meaning context; it represented aspects of self identity; and it represented dialogical role-relationship patterns characteristic of the individual.

The authors concluded that metaphors developed and shared between therapist and client may enrich and sharpen apprehension of an inner experience. It may symbolize an inner sense of self identity. It may represent the interaction between different self identities or between an inner identity and other individuals or metaphor may represent any combination of these aspects.

Angus and Rennie argued that the experience of apprehending an initial, immediate flood of varied imagistic and emotional associations precedes the act of generating conceptual meanings for metaphors. In keeping with that view, Angus found the act of verbally describing privately experienced images, recollections

and feelings typically led clients to a fuller awareness of implicit beliefs and emotions.

Therapists and clients generated distinctly different private imaginal representations of the same metaphor spoken in the session. It was suggested by a participant in their study that the imaginal associations evoked in the listener by a spoken metaphor might best be understood as a coconstruction of the descriptors contained in the phrase combined with ideosyncratic, private associations of the listener.

Amira (1982) examined both therapist's and client's use of figurative language in successful and unsuccessful psychotherapy to explore the findings of empirical research that (a) novel figurative language occurs in bursts (Pollio & Barlow, 1975), (b) those novel figurative bursts are related to the attainment of insight (Barlow, Pollio & Fine, 1977), (c) cliched figures do not lead to insight (Barlow et al., 1977), (d) in a successful therapy the patient initiated most of the themes embodied by the novel figures, but that the therapists response to them may dictate whether an insight promoting "burst" will be sustained (Barlow, 1973), and (e) that patient process level and positive outcome may be related to the therapists use of evocative, connotative language (Rice, 1965, 1973). Novel figure refers to metaphorical language that is original for that user and frozen figure refers to a commonplace or cliched figure of speech according to an analysis procedure devised by Barlow, Kerlin and Pollio (1971).

Amira found that novel figures were no more indicative of positive therapeutic outcome than cliched figures of speech. And that therapists in his study were consistent in their use of figurative language accross both successful and unsuccessful psychotherapy cases. Amira abandoned the novel-frozen figurative language distinction in psychotherapy as unreliable and lacking in clinical relevence. He noted that frozen figures can be "unfrozen" by voice quality, gesture or a look, i.e., nonverbal communication.

Amira concluded that the functions of metaphor and figurative language in therapy were complex and diverse, and frequency counts of figurative language were irrelevant to the role of metaphor in psychotherapy. He identified some of these functions as they were revealed in his analysis: clarification, interpretation, broaching a threatening issue with a client, to engage clients, to develop a shared process language. Amira concluded that the various therapeutic functions of metaphor must be understood in assessing their importance to therapeutic outcome. He recommended that future investigators should be clinicians themselves so that clinically relevent verses irrelevant designations could be made in the rating of figurative language forms.

Summary

There are two streams of research in the literature on counsellors' metaphor use. The first is the literature in the

positivist tradition which examines counsellor told metaphors from a linear, process-outcome paradigm (Barker, 1985; Erickson, Rossi & Rossi, 1976; Gordon, 1978; Lankton & Lankton, 1983, 1986; Lenrow, 1966; Zeig, 1980). In this literature the counsellor is viewed as an agent who is responsible for psychotherapeutic change in the client. The counsellor is portrayed as a person of skill who intervenes in particular ways to cause psychotherapeutic change in the client.

The second stream of research on metaphor use in counselling is in the phenomenological tradition (Angus & Rennie, 1988, 1989; Amira, 1982; Brooks, 1985; Evans, 1985, 1988). This research views metaphor as an emergent phenomenon that evolves by means of a coconstructed meaning system or interactive dialogue between counsellor and client.

Counsellors' intentions for telling contextually anomolous extended metaphorical forms, i.e., stories and anecdotes, have not been examined in a systematic study by researchers in either the positivist or phenomenological tradition. Metaphors examined in studies have been brief metaphoric phrases which have not entailed a sudden shift to a new meaning context, i.e., the studies have examined 'figurative language' metaphors. This study has focused exclusively on the use of contextually anomolous extended metaphoric forms in counselling.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The phenomenological approach

This inquiry is in the tradition of descriptive phenomenological psychology. The goal is to provide a coherent description and understanding of clinical metaphor-telling. I will present a description of what, when and why counsellors tell metaphors to their clients. The "what" refers to the spoken metaphors, the "when" refers to the clinical context, and the "why" refers to the intentions counsellors have for telling their metaphors.

A phenomenological understanding of metaphor-telling involves a retrieval of purpose, of intention, of the unique configuration of thoughts and feelings which preceded the metaphor-telling and found its manifestation in the observable consequences of action, i.e., the telling of the metaphor. Understanding metaphor-telling involves grasping the meaning of the counsellor's intentions.

Phenomenological research is always a project of someone: a real person, who, in the context of particular individual, social, and historical life circumstances, sets out to make sense of a certain aspect of human existence. The recognition that such research is interpretive does not make implausible the insights generated from it, but it does point out the scope and nature of phenomenological research. A phenomenological

description is always *one* interpretation, and no single interpretation will ever exhaust the possibility of yet another complimentary, or even potentially richer, description (van Manen, 1984).

My analysis is an interpretation of the recollections of counsellors as they were recorded and transcribed. The transcripts can only advise me as to the plausibility of my interpretation; they cannot offer me conclusive proof that my interpretation is right (Bauman, 1978). The interpretation I give in this inquiry will ultimately be accepted or rejected on the basis of agreement. The basis for such agreement is that interpreters (other readers) share, or come to share after an open dialogue (or reading) and justification, similar values and interests (Smith & Heshusius, 1986). A good explanation is one that will make sense of the data, and what makes good sense is a matter of shared agreement among readers.

The strengths of this qualitative approach to research are the concrete depiction of detail, portrayal of process, and attention to the perspectives of those studied. These strengths appear in this research through quotations and descriptions that illustrate the perspectives of the participants. Although this study is interpretive it gains validity to the extent to which my interpretation becomes inclusive of the perspectives given to me by the participants. While the inclusion of the participants' perspectives does not guarantee validity it does guard against the idiosyncrasy of the specific situation, the views of the

individual counsellor, and my own (researcher) perspective, and gives greater confidence to the conclusions of my analysis.

The validity of my analysis is not gained by following a preexisting conceptual framework or set of techniques by which to analyse the transcripts. Rather, the procedures followed in the analysis were related to this particular inquiry and what made sense to do within the context of this inquiry (see section on data analysis). The research is credible if the conclusions are coherent and are consistent with the theoretical premises on which they are based.

Participants. The participants were 5 professional counsellors who worked for agencies serving the communities of Greater Vancouver. All counsellors had been influenced by Eriksonian and Strategic therapy and theory. All counsellors had completed their clinical training for a Master's degree. Three had graduated, two were still completing degree requirements. Years of counselling experience ranged from 1 to 7. There were four men and one woman counsellors.

Procedure.

The procedure of this inquiry followed a systematic approach. Data-gathering guidelines (sample, selection criteria, structured interviews) were chosen prior to the beginning of the inquiry. Each counsellor audiorecorded several counselling sessions, choosing from his/her client caseload, allowing for a variety of clinical issues to be sampled. Written permission was

obtained from each client participating in the study.

I listened to each audiotape within 7 days of its recording date and identified all counsellor metaphors which met the criteria described earlier (i.e., all stories, anecdotes, analogies, etc. which were contextually anomalous). Each counselling session was debriefed, i.e., the counsellor was interviewed, before the counsellor met with that client again.

All counsellors had received a one page information sheet describing counsellor intentions and the study in which s/he was participating. For each audiotape which contained one or more metaphors I held an interview with the counsellor. This interview was audiotaped and later transcribed for analysis.

In this stimulated recall interview (see Appendix A) I first oriented the counsellor to the tape he or she was about to listen to, i.e., I identified the client(s) and date of recording. Then I started the tape one minute before the metaphor was told. If the counsellor indicated difficulty in recalling the meaning context I rewound the tape and played about 2 minutes of the dialogue preceding the metaphor. This proved to be successful in stimulating recall.

The counselling audiotape was stopped after the metaphor was told. The Interview began immediately. This interview procedure was repeated for each metaphor on the audiotape.

Data analysis. There were 46 interviews analysed in this study.

Keith provided 12 metaphors over 5 sessions, Miles provided 12 over 5 sessions, Bill provided 8 over 4 sessions, Carol provided 5 over 3 sessions, and Phil provided 9 over 2 sessions. Carol taped 3 sessions and Bill taped 1 session which contained no metaphors which met the criteria of this study. Phil only taped 2 sessions for this study.

A matrix was constructed to chart the intentions, process and source of every metaphor told by each counsellor. There were 46 metaphor interviews represented in this matrix. Descriptions of intentions, process and source were coded and entered in the matrix. The code identified the material as belonging to a category. Categories were based on distinctions that were made about the transcript material.

As I read through the transcripts I began sorting and grouping the descriptions on the basis of similarities and differences. These distinctions were noted both within and between counsellors transcripts. When I grouped descriptions together in the early stages of category formation the implicit question that guided my analysis was, "What are the defining characteristics of this group of similar descriptions?" As I perceived similarity and repetition, or patterns, I began to note the defining characteristics of a pattern and how patterns differed from one another.

I immersed myself in the transcripts, trying to clarify the emerging categories. I moved back and forth from the particular

descriptions of the Interviews to the general conceptions I was forming, i.e., I was moving through different levels of abstraction. Moving beyond the characteristics of the various descriptions and the noted patterns of an emerging category to a conception which is superordinate to the particular descriptions but which encompasses them required a shift in thinking to a higher level of abstraction. I experienced these shifts as qualitative "leaps" to a more abstract way of thinking about the material. These "leaps" could not be planned or made to occur. They were unpredictable and seemed to happen of their own volition. The experience of seeking these higher order abstractions was like searching for buried treasure without knowing what the treasure looks like and without a map: you only know you have found it when you have found it.

When a category emerged in my thinking I immediately filled it out, broadening it into a more complete conceptualization. A number of associated ideas seemed to converge and the conceptualization seemed to "fall into place" in the analysis.

Each time a category emerged in the analysis I used it as an organizing device. I went back through the transcripts to see if the category made sense of the descriptions, i.e., I wanted to see if the transcripts would confirm or disconfirm the category. All such categories were confirmed by this procedure.

All of the categories realized by qualitative "leaps" in thinking were employed in this study. When these categories were

first realized they were accompanied by a personal sense of certainty, as if I had just perceived the fundamental characteristics of all the various examples or descriptions in the transcripts. However, not all distinctions resulted in category formation. As I read the transcripts and engaged in sorting and grouping activity I developed "hunches" about how things fit together, how various features were associated and what the underlying themes were. Some of this activity led to matrix formation, some hunches were noted, explored and later abandoned. Many hunches did not lead to important distinctions.

When forming the categories of intentional types (Chapter 4) and process types (Chapter 6) I relied on the more exemplary Interview reports to guide the conceptualization of the categories. Some counsellor descriptions were more revealing than others of the defining characteristics of the categories. All of the 46 instances of metaphor use analysed in this study met the defining criteria, i.e., "fit" into one of the categories of the analysis.

The analysis of the material on beliefs (Chapter 5) required much less in the way of sudden leaps to higher order abstractions. In this material the move from particular instances to categories followed a much more linear, step by step process of thinking. Conceptualizations from the transcripts were grouped for similarity and difference. These were then reduced to the defining aspects of the conceptualization and written up in a logical and coherent form.

The categorization of metaphors was based on the counsellor's intentions as described in the interviews. It was not the linguistic form of the metaphor itself that determined its category designation. One cannot know the intended meaning of the metaphor without knowing the intention of the counsellor. It is the intended meaning of the metaphor as revealed through the counsellor's responses to the interview questions that determined the category designations of this study.

I have included transcript materials quite liberally in the following pages including several metaphors and counsellors' reflections on their metaphor-telling. The inclusion of transcripts as exemplars of categories or illustrations was one consideration. I also wanted to lead the reader into the world being portrayed and encourage an experience of metaphor-telling not at the level of abstract theory but through the particular instances of counsellors communicating with metaphors. I wanted to invite the reader into the experiential world of clinical metaphor-telling, to elicit an understanding with some depth on an emotional, aesthetic as well as cognitive level.

As I proposed earlier, phenomenological research is always a project of someone acting within the context of particular individual, social and historical life circumstances. I brought to this analysis my own life experiences as a counsellor who has used metaphor clinically, my own tacit knowledge of its relevance and effectiveness, and my own explicit theoretical conceptualizations and understandings of clinical

metaphor-telling. The analysis set out in the following pages is not determined solely by the transcripts or the understandings I originally brought to the project. It is the result of a phenomenological rendering of the transcripts that occurred over a period of several months.

Chapter 4

Intentions

Introduction

All metaphors in this study introduce a new context to the client. A metaphor, by definition, involves a transaction between two different contexts of meaning. By telling a metaphor, the counsellor is implicitly asking the client to process their experience in terms of an experience from a different context. This new context will entail different associations, referents and meanings. Whatever the nature of the client's situation (problem, conflict, dilemma) the counsellor is attempting to draw them into a new meaning context.

The counsellor's intentions for drawing their clients into these new contexts varies with each use of metaphor. My analysis revealed four categories of metaphor-telling. The four intentional types were joining, reframing, leading, and advising metaphors. Counsellors' intentions were distinctly different for each of the four types of metaphor use.

Categories of metaphors

Joining metaphors. The intention behind the joining metaphor is to communicate empathy. The counsellor joins the client by demonstrating an empathy for their current situation, i.e., their presenting problem, emotional state or self-understanding. The essential feature of this intentional type is that the

counsellor communicates empathy not by paraphrasing, summarizing and reflecting the client's situation within the meaning context that has evolved in the counselling discourse but in conveying his or her intention by introducing a new context, i.e., a metaphor.

The joining metaphor summarizes the feelings, thoughts or experiences of the client's situation in one image or conceptualization. The counsellor highlights through metaphor what he or she perceives to be the essential issue in the situation the client has described. The counsellor reduces the client's narrative to its essential characteristics or dynamics and reflects this understanding back to the client in a succinct metaphor. By summarizing the client's situation in a metaphor the counsellors communicate that they understand the client's situation and the significance of that situation.

Joining metaphors are typically short and relatively simple. They present one or perhaps two ideas. Some of the metaphors in this category are concrete, with human characters and some are more abstract.

Counsellors use joining metaphors to comfort their clients. The common descriptors respondents in this study used to describe this general intention were to help the client "feel understood, normal", "feel more relaxed", "feel that they have been heard", "feel relief, optimism." The focus seemed to be on empathizing and communicating to the client that they have been

understood. The new context introduced by the metaphor is intended by the counsellor not to suggest a new direction or promote insight or self-awareness but only to communicate empathy, understanding, and to comfort the client in what they are experiencing.

Bill was counselling a woman who had left an abusive spouse. She was describing her sense of powerlessness over her spouse's ongoing emotional abuse of their child and her attempts to protect the child. Bill offered the metaphor:

Like trying to vacuum a house that has no windows. The dirt just keeps blowing in all the time. So every time you vacuum the floor there's just more stuff coming in.

Bill said of his intentions: "I merely wanted her to know that I understood that, join with her on that and reflect that sentiment...to reflect or match her situation in a way that wasn't so threatening, probably a little softer and more palatable."

Carol was counselling a woman whose son had made a number of positive changes while in a treatment program for disturbed children. At times, the mother felt discouraged and depressed over her son's condition. They were discussing the positive changes and possible future changes when Carol offered the metaphor:

It's like fine tuning, you know. It's like before we had a car that had four flat tires and the muffler was backfiring and spitting and stalling and stuff and now we can worry about how the engine sounds. What kind of tires we want now.

Carol said in the interview, "This woman was discouraged and depressed with the way things were. We're in a different situation now and there has been change. I wanted her to have one notion to think about [the changes] with...give her a way of consolidating the bits and pieces of information into one notion, a picture, and to feel good, to feel relief, optimism, energy...just generally feel better."

Keith was counselling a woman who "was describing her feelings of ambivalence, terror, attraction, but mostly fear about going forward in her present relationship." Keith drew the analogy:

It's kind of like standing on the edge of a precipice and in the dark and not knowing if you take that jump whether it'll be one foot or a thousand feet. But you can't go forward until you cross that precipice, so it might kill you or it might be very simple.

When I asked Keith how this metaphor might be useful for this client he replied, "Well, I didn't tell the client this person [in the metaphor] took the step. I didn't take her anywhere with this one. The intention was to normalize the feeling. And probably to let her know through that metaphor that she was understood."

Bill was counselling a husband and wife who held conflicting views of the goals of the marriage. The wife wanted children, the husband did not. As the conflict had become more bitter the loving, satisfying relationship they once had together was being forgotten. Bill offered the metaphor:

So the relationship is kind of sitting up
there on the shelf like an old book.

When I asked Bill about his intentions for telling that brief metaphor he said, "I'm right there with the client, reflecting, validating and summarizing... I'm addressing their sense of panic, their sense of anxiety...about how long they've been estranged in the relationship."

These counsellors are comforting their clients. The metaphors are not complex or confusing. They are simple, probably easily understood. Summarizing and reflecting a client's experience back to a client in a metaphor seems to soften the harshness of the experience. It probably helps to establish or maintain an affective connection with the client. More than the other categories of metaphor in this study, these

joining metaphors seem to address the affective experience of clients. Counsellors want their clients to relax and feel understood when they tell these joining metaphors. They want their clients to feel better.

Reframing metaphors. In counselling, to reframe is to change the conceptual or emotional setting or viewpoint in relation to which a situation is experienced and to place it in another frame which fits the 'facts' of the same concrete situation equally well, and thereby changes its entire meaning (Watzlawick, Weakland & Fisch, 1974). Metaphor, which entails a transaction between differing contexts of meaning, provides a well suited vehicle for reframing.

Reframing metaphors can be relatively short like the joining metaphors, i.e., a few phrases, but typically are several phrases long like an anecdote. They are typically simple and concrete although they do address complex clinical issues. They are human analogies, i.e., they have human characters doing things usually in human social situations.

On the printed page, reframing and joining metaphors read alike. However, the difference in these two metaphor types, as revealed in the stimulated recall interviews, lay in the counsellors' intentions for telling them to their clients. As discussed in the previous section, counsellors tell joining metaphors to normalize, communicate empathy and often to comfort their clients. Reframing metaphors are told for different

reasons.

The common descriptors respondents used to describe their intentions for telling reframing metaphors were "to think about herself and family in a different way," "to change the client's perspective," "to see his role and realize the situation," "to develop a new frame of reference," "to make the situation explicit," "to move the clients to a new understanding."

Like all metaphors the reframing metaphor presents the counsellor's view of the essential aspects of a client's situation. These aspects are presented in a new context, i.e., a metaphor that is analogous to the client's situation. This new context provides a new frame of reference to the client by which they may understand themselves in their situation.

Positive reframing metaphors. Reframing metaphors can have a positive or a negative connotation. With the positive reframing metaphor, the counsellor is providing a conceptualization to the client that she intends for her to adopt. The client is being asked to see herself in the terms of the metaphor and adopt this new frame of reference or way of understanding oneself as their own. Figuratively speaking, the counsellor is asking the client to live in the metaphor and allow the metaphor to cognitively and affectively reshape her experience of herself and her world.

Carol was counselling a mother and her two children. The mother was having difficulty assuming and exercising authority with respect to her two children who had been acting up in a

disruptive way at home and in the community. At one point in the session Carol said:

I get the feeling that as a team, that this team of people is working together a lot better, is a lot more comfortable. Mom's the captain of the team, you guys are the players on the team.

Carol explained the clinical context in which she told the metaphor. "As a family their roles have become so mixed up, with the little girl taking on decision making and mom abdicating her position, that the ideas of family and what mother does in a family don't seem to make much sense to them anymore...The idea of a team with a captain seems to be something they can understand or I hoped was another way of looking at the hierarchy of control, responsibility and authority...so those kids could feel like they were participants and they were important but they were not the boss. They were the players on the team and mom was the captain of the team."

When I asked Carol what she intended for the family to do, think or feel upon hearing her metaphor she replied, "To consider their relationships with each other in a different frame of reference...to have another conceptualization for family...It gives them another map to hang their experiences on."

Carol said she hoped her metaphor would "touch them on a variety of levels. That cognitively [the kids] would understand they were players and didn't have the ultimate say. That affectively [the kids] had a feeling of inclusion at the same time as a different cognitive framework for what that inclusion looks like. Clarity about their position and the affect that goes with clarity is relief and security and that's what I was hoping to allow them an opportunity to experience."

Later in the same session the family was describing a recent event where the mother had spoken up for her children in public. Carol told the family:

So your mom really stood up for you.
That's what the captain of the team does.
They take charge and they make sure that
things work the way they should.

Again Carol described her intention for the family "to look at [the event] through the frame of reference of the captain of the team standing up for the rights of the team...So that would give the kids confidence that yes, mom is the captain of our team, we can relax, she is in charge. And also to give mom some encouragement for acting appropriately as a mom."

Through the use of metaphor, Carol was offering this family a new way of understanding their interrelationships, a new cognitive structure which implied differing roles for family members, and a power structure hierarchy with the mother in

authority. The family was encouraged to see themselves through the terms of the metaphor, to assume the roles implied by the metaphor and at the level of experience, to think, feel and behave in accordance with those roles. Figuratively speaking, Carol was asking the family members to experience themselves and their world as if they were living the metaphor, and the metaphor were living in them.

Negative reframing metaphors. When counsellors tell negative reframing metaphors they are asking the client to recognize that the metaphor is about them and to stop doing what is being depicted in the metaphor. The implication may be that the client should do the opposite of what is being depicted but it is only implied, not stated. Counsellors often intend for these negative reframe metaphors to disrupt rigid patterns of behavior so that new possibilities, new options, new solutions can be explored in counselling.

Phil was counselling a woman who had unrealistic expectations for the development of mutual trust with her spouse and was sabotaging her efforts by insisting that trust be immediate. Phil constructed the following metaphor.

One of the things we know about a seed is that if you take it and put soil over it, it will grow. If you wait a couple of minutes and you go through the dirt and you take it out and it hasn't grown. And you

kind of go, "hunh", and you stick it in and you cover it up again. And you come back in half an hour and dig it back up and go, "it still hasn't grown." Put it back in, cover it, pour some water in, wait a half hour, dig it up again, it still hasn't grown. And you kind of keep going, "Look, it proves that it's not going to grow." As long as you do that, one of the things you can be sure of is that it will never grow.

Phil said of his intentions, "I wanted her to see what her efforts look like in a safer way. I wasn't just talking. I was [pretending to] pull the seed out of the dirt so she could see this frantic effort and futility of it all...My tone of voice speeds up with anxiety as we go along, like the more I dig up the seed the more frustrated and annoyed I am. So my voice picks up and then at the end of it just sort of gives up...[It was] to mirror for her what I perceived her to be doing. I hoped she would laugh at it. She has a good sense of humor. Hopefully she'll be able to laugh at her efforts and how that's the same way of going after trust."

In his metaphor Phil made an analogy between his client's destructive efforts to force trust in her relationship and his personification of a naive gardner who prevents his seed from growing by constantly checking to see if it has grown. Phil was hoping his client would "see herself" in his metaphor, that she

would recognize the gardner's frantic impatience as her own. He offered her a new way of understanding herself. Phil was aware that he was challenging her current belief about the nature of trust in a marriage. Rather than confront her directly he chose "a safer way" by constructing an informative and humorous analogy that was more likely to be accepted.

Reframing metaphors can focus on a set of dynamics or on a single dynamic as in the following example. Bill was counselling a couple whose communication was characterized by angry, confused arguing. Bill identified a double bind in the couple's communication pattern and told the following metaphor:

It's sort of like, it's certainly not the same kind of thing, but there's some similarity just like when a couple decides where they're going out for dinner and the person says, "Yeah, I want to go there," and they don't really mean it and you find out halfway through the meal that they don't really want to be at that restaurant. They don't like the restaurant and the food stinks and they're kind of angry at you for the decision. And you end up feeling, you know, blaming yourself that you decided to go to this restaurant or to the party or whatever. It's not quite your fault you're there. Even though they said yes. And that

makes life difficult and it's kind of crazy
in a certain way.

Bill said of his intentions, "I'm trying to do some negative connotation about this pattern that she'll be able to relate to. To make explicit the bind that they're in through demonstration, through analogy...but in a less emotionally laden parallel so the emotion doesn't get in the way.

Leading metaphors. In counselling, "leading" refers to the introduction of a new idea (thought, image, behavior) to someone with whom one has developed rapport. This new idea is different from the client's present state or understanding and moves the client to a desired state or understanding. This desired goal state is variable: it may be an experience (e.g. relaxation, anger), a simple behavior (e.g. talking about one's feelings), or a complex behavior (e.g. establishing transformational changes) (Gilligan, 1987).

Whether the counsellor is introducing a conceptualization, suggesting a new behavior, or advancing an experiential intervention, the distinguishing feature of counsellors' intentions for telling leading metaphors is to introduce something new to the client. The common descriptors counsellors in this study used to describe their intentions for telling leading metaphors were "to introduce a new notion to solve his problem," "think about new possibilities," "think about self in the future," "stimulate his unconscious", "to learn something",

"to experience through the story a sense of individuation,"
"develop a new perception."

Leading metaphors are characteristically longer anecdotes or stories. They are concrete metaphors with human characters sometimes in social settings, sometimes with a solitary protagonist on his or her own. The metaphors are complex: there are several ideas presented as the story is told.

Metaphors in this category have a pacing-leading sequence. In the first part, or pacing part of the story, the counsellor attempts to have the client identify with the terms of the story and more typically, with the protagonist in the story. This is done by making the story isomorphic to the client's situation, i.e., the counsellor describes the same type of situation (interactions between characters, dynamics, emotions, attitudes, problems) but in a different context.

Once the counsellor has paced the client and the client has identified either consciously or unconsciously with the story, the counsellor leads to something new. Whether it is an idea, an emotion or a behavior, the counsellor is introducing something to the client that they do not experience, know or do.

Like the other metaphor types the leading metaphor highlights certain aspects of the client's situation. The metaphor is a representation of the counsellor's view of an essential clinical issue at that moment in the counselling process.

Keith was counselling a woman in her mid-forties who was having difficulty letting go emotionally of her adult children who were leaving home. He addressed the issue of her dealing with the separation from her daughter with the following metaphor:

I had an experience. I had a grandmother years ago who I had kind of a tough relationship with for a little while. I was close to her but not close to her in a funny kind of way...but there's a close emotional bond between us. And I remember one year I went back to where she lives, and I went to see her and I don't know what inspired me but I got in touch with the part of me that knew if she died tomorrow there would have been many things that I wanted to say to her. Many caring things, many messages to her which I would have regretted not saying.

So I didn't know when I would see her next and she was old, and so I took the opportunity to let her know the sorts of things that I knew that I wanted to say in order to have made my peace. And it was a very significant thing to do because she's still alive and it's changed our whole relationship. It was coming to the point for

me I think of recognizing that in this life there are things that seem important at the time until that time is passed and then suddenly things are put back in perspective.

Keith said of his intentions, "I told the story in order to invite her to have a sense of, fantasize about, completion. To experience it...by identifying with a character in a story and experience the sense of unfinished business...as she has with her daughter. Having identified with that part then to join the protagonist in dealing with that situation in some helpful way. In this situation it was to express some emotions basically. To do some separation through expressing emotions that need to be said as though the person were going to die."

"I wanted her to think about the possibility of doing some finishing with her daughter, wanted her to feel curious, perhaps once again a sense of other options opening up. And ideally, for her to do a similar sort of thing with her daughter in order to invite that sort of separation individuation."

Keith was counselling a woman who was confused and afraid of going forward in her present relationship. He asked her what she thought she was learning from being in the relationship and she replied that she didn't know. He then told her the following story.

You know, there was this little ditty of a story that I remembered seeing a while

ago. I think it was maybe written for a number of different reasons but it sometimes comes back to me. There was this woman, she's walking down a road. And suddenly she falls in a dark hole. And she's falling, and she lands at the bottom and she's lost and she's terrified and she doesn't know how she got here or how to get out. And she's just scrambling around and finally she manages through some act of God or something as it appears to her to find herself out of this hole. You know, kind of panting and sweating and going "phew."

So the next day this woman is walking down the road again. And she sees the hole this time but she still falls in. And she's lost and scared and terrified but she knows she's been here before and she spies out of the corner of her eye a ladder. So she climbs out and shakes herself off and walks on down the road.

And the next day the woman is walking down the road and she sees the hole and she says, "God, there's that hole again", and so she starts to go by it on the side but she slips and falls in. And this time she says,

"God, I knew that hole was there and I know I got too close to it and fell in so I'm just going to get out of this damn hole and continue." She's a lot less afraid, it's not as dark. And she knows where the ladder is immediately so she gets out and walks on.

The fourth day she sees the hole and she's really careful. She gives it a wide birth but she still feels pretty scared, pretty terrified but she manages to get past the hole this time.

And the fifth day she takes another road.

Keith said, "My intention was to lead her unconscious to a process of learning. So that unconsciously she had a map for the learnings that she's going to be going through consciously around relationships...learnings she can fall back on when she feels lost, confused, uncertain, doesn't know the way out. Something that will allow her unconscious to know there is a ladder and that she's learning. She's somewhere along the road of this process. If it's working the way I intend it to then it's creating some kind of an unconscious roadmap. And giving her some kind of outline of the learning process which involves emotions and taking risks and learning all sort of wrapped up in one."

When I asked Keith how the metaphor itself was isomorphic to the client's situation he said, "The character I chose for this story is female. She is falling in a black pit which I believe matches some of my client's descriptors. I mean she's talking about being confused, about really not knowing why she's doing it. There is a pairing through gender and through feelings. She's scared, she's lost, she's desperate. I'm trying to use a lot of the words that she's been using with me. ...And then bringing the client to the place where she hasn't gotten to yet, which is, she finds the ladder, she climbs out."

Phil was counselling a woman who was interacting with her violent ex-spouse in a way Phil considered risky. He told her this metaphor:

One thing I would never encourage someone to do is to be assertive with a bear in a bear pit. I mean, I don't care how assertive you are, if that bear wants to eat it's going to devour you, it's going to kill you. You cannot do that without being prepared. And so you might, if you're going into a bear pit you would carry certain things with you to protect you. You know, a tranquilizer gun, whatever. You might have people standing by ready to tranquilize the bear or shoot it or whatever.

When I asked Phil what it was he intended for his client to do he said, "To do whatever she had to do to make herself safe in his presence...to use whatever resources she can to make it safe...and to recognize that that's ok and she would be foolhardy to do otherwise."

Phil explained the isomorphism in his metaphor: "He (the ex-spouse) clearly is a bear and a very dangerous animal. Bearpit being his turf. It has more of an isolating aspect to it. There's an isolation that goes with being in a bear pit...it's difficult for other people to get to. The people with the tranquilizer guns are the support people that can be there for you should you need them...they are ready to tranquilize the bear at a moment's notice. So you make sure that whatever supports you need are right there with loaded guns ready to do whatever is necessary to make sure you're safe."

Once again we see the notion of the counsellor joining the client at her level of experience with a metaphor, and then leading her to something new. Phil said, "I hoped the metaphor would stir up some sort of physiology, possibly mirroring the physiology she experiences when she's in his presence. If she is able to conjure up an image of being in a bearpit hopefully it's an anxiety provoking one that would stand out in her mind that that's what is happening when she's with him." Phil told a metaphor that he hoped would match his client's experience at the level of emotion and sensation. After this was achieved he introduced the ideas of precaution, support and safety when

involved in such a situation with a bear in a bearpit, the analogy for the situations she gets into with her ex-spouse.

Bill was counselling a ten year old girl who had experienced emotional abuse from her father and had witnessed violence between her parents. As the girl was talking to Mark about her brother, Bill told the following anecdote:

When I was growing up I thought my brother was going to be a banker because he was so miserly. Which means he was very tight with his money. He was always counting his pennies. You'd ask if you could borrow a quarter and he'd go "No." He always counts all his money in little piles. He'd never spend it either. Not until he got older. This was like when he was 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. He changed after a while. But I thought he was going to be a banker. He was very, very careful with money. You know, it's funny you ask. He's an accountant. You know what they do, eh? They look after money. Funny, that's the way it turned out to be. So I guess sometimes the things that you're good at or the things that you like to do when you're a kid sometimes do have an effect on what you do when you grow up.

When I asked Bill about his intentions for telling the anecdote he said, "It is connected to the premise that talking about being in the future creates at some level that experience of being in the future. And for people who are feeling kind of tentative about their current safety, their current position, it's useful to somehow create that experience for them at some level."

"Growing up is a real intangible thing for kids. So what I'm trying to do there is some linking. So I used my brother as an entity, as a concrete tangible in the world who was once a little boy who is now grown up and try to draw some connections between who he was as a person and who he is later. That transformation is important for her. We were talking about a little boy who was just in a trivial way hanging onto his money but that became something more...That became an attribute, a thing of power. The little boy became a man. And that of course implies the little girl becomes a woman and her brother becomes a man. I believe for her own security that envisioning herself as an autonomous adult gives her that sense of inner safety, that one day she will stand up to her father."

Advising metaphors. A counsellor's intention for using an advising metaphor is to make a point or introduce a new perspective to the client. Counsellors intend for these metaphors to be processed cognitively, i.e., there is no attempt to engage the client emotionally or experientially with these metaphors.

What distinguishes advising metaphors from metaphors in the other three categories is that the counsellors devote less attention to developing isomorphism with the client's emotional experiencing or behavioral functioning. Instead, the counsellor matches the themes of the client's situation in a more abstract metaphor. The metaphor is relevant to the client's situation but is less "personal" than the other metaphor types.

Advising metaphors are usually brief. They include aphorisms, maxims, proverbs, analogies, and brief anecdotes.

Although metaphor-telling is an indirect approach to counselling, advising metaphors are quite direct in that they are aimed at the conscious mind. Denotative rather than connotative language is used and colorful or figurative language is kept to a minimum. It seemed to me that the counsellors in this study intended for these metaphors to be easily understood by their clients.

Bill was counselling a couple who were experiencing a lot of misunderstanding in their communication. Bill told them:

It's just like a transceiver receiver thing.

The transceiver can be in great shape sending out great messages but if the receiver isn't hearing it or isn't tuned to the right frequency it doesn't work.

Bill said of his intentions, "I think I'm taking more of an educative stance there discussing generically what communication

is all about. Giving and receiving messages. I'm trying to move them out of their egocentric view that what I say has a real meaning and it's understandable to everyone as an objective reality to a view that they may say one thing but their partner hears another."

"I'm making explicit a problematic dynamic in this couple's relationship through a very concrete metaphor or analogy that he can relate to. He's a fireman and he's very familiar with radio communications equipment. Sometimes you do have a good transceiver and your receiver is screwy and vice versa. So I'm trying to provide a very concrete anchor to enlighten him about the dynamics of communication."

Miles was counselling a woman who grew up in a family in which there was alcoholism. She took care of her parents and brothers. She was now trying to take care of her boyfriend in the same way and ignoring her own needs. Miles told her:

You know, I think of my friend who has this pet. You know pets they always take care of themselves first. You put food out, they're out there, right? They're out there for the food. They don't care if you've got a painful foot or something like that. And he sometimes says that's some of the attractiveness of having something self-centered like that.

Miles said of his intentions, "I wanted her to hear there was something that was o.k. in taking care of your feelings first. Something she could not do in her family of origin. I wanted her to start taking that message home with her that she was most important right now.

I used the old dog metaphor because families tend to center around the dog. The dog takes care of itself first. I just wanted her to see that image. And how her image is very different in the family where she is always making sure that others are o.k. first. That she has a right also to be that center of attention."

Keith was counselling a woman who was experiencing separation issues from her children who were leaving home. She was being very critical and judgemental of her own efforts at parenting. Keith said:

What you say there reminds me of this saying that a friend of mine has in her office. It says each day I try to remind myself to treat myself as I treat others. It's sort of a reversal of the old one, the biblical thing, and reversing it. It kind of reminds me of it as you're talking.

Keith said of his intentions, "Maybe just to stop for a minute. Maybe just to reflect for a moment that she might be judging her own behaviors with a very different yardstick than

she judges others."

When I asked Keith how this metaphor applied to his client's situation he said, "It's not specific to her really. It's just an aphorism, just a general attitude to life."

Exclusivity of categories. These intentional metaphor types were mutually exclusive, with two exceptions. Counsellors frequently had intentions to demonstrate empathy, i.e., to join with their clients while telling reframing or leading metaphors. The second exception was that occasionally counsellors intended to both reframe and lead clients with the same metaphor.

Chapter 5

Beliefs

This chapter describes counsellors' beliefs about clinical impact: how metaphors function and how they are useful and effective in counselling practice. Beliefs about clinical impact are examined within the broader context of counselling discourse and client processes. This chapter presents an understanding of the conceptualizations and speculations of counsellors on how metaphors are useful and effective as interventions in the counselling process and in the lives of the clients.

This is an interpretive analysis based on the interview transcripts and as such extends beyond the representation of counsellors' beliefs to include my own conceptualizations of the efficacy of metaphor. My conceptualizations, however, remain grounded in the empirical data of this study.

There were five general clinical areas in which counsellors thought their metaphors were effective interventions.

1. avoidance of client resistance and reactivity to emotionally sensitive issues;
2. disruption of engrained patterns of behavior to allow for new responses either initiated by the client or suggested by the counsellor;
3. promotion of self-awareness, recognition of patterns and insight or new understandings;
4. stimulation of unconscious processes resulting in new

understandings and responses;

5. elicitation of experiential response that facilitates change.

These five categories are not mutually exclusive of one another. A counsellor may draw on a variety of beliefs when intervening with metaphor. When counsellors responded to my questions in the Interviews about the impact of their metaphors they mentioned numerous beliefs and theoretical speculations, weaving themes together in a natural conversational style. The beliefs were categorized in this analysis in order to present a logical and coherent set of conceptualizations.

1. Resistance and emotional reactivity. Metaphor is used by counsellors as an indirect way of intervening with clients. It is a common response from clients seeking help from counsellors to dislike or resent being "told what to do." Some clients respond defensively or noncooperatively when a counsellor suggests they think, feel or do something different as a way of resolving their problem.

Counsellors use metaphors to soften the impact of the communications they are advancing. Metaphor allows a counsellor to avoid being perceived as an authoritative expert who tells clients how they should handle their difficulties. Counsellors are skilled at assessing how they are being perceived by their clients. They often sense how directly they can intervene with clients and how directly they can intervene in particular counselling issues.

Keith was counselling a young woman who was attempting to gain emotional and behavioral independence from her family of origin. He noticed she was trying to do everything the opposite to what her mother would do. Keith told a story about a son who tried to do everything the opposite of what his father would do and in so doing denied himself some of the activities he really enjoyed. Keith was pointing out the dangers of being limited by one's defiance under the illusion of independence.

In the interview Keith explained his use of metaphor. "I often find that saying something in the form of a story changes the way it is received. With this client and this issue in particular my taking any kind of a one-up position or authority position, giving advice, telling her what she should or shouldn't do would be putting her in a one-down position similar to the one she has with her mother. Delivering the message in a story allowed her to hear it without any need to do anything about it consciously, or to say, "Yeah, I already thought about that," or to resist me. I wasn't telling her to do anything."

Metaphor is a way of respecting the integrity of a person's perspectives, meanings, values and problems. It is a way of respecting the power structure in families, respecting a person's position in their relationship to others. In Keith's example, he wanted to avoid assuming a position with his client like the one she was trying to individuate from, i.e., an authoritative parent. Keith chose the indirect approach of making suggestions through metaphor not just to avoid a

transference or defiant reaction from his client, but also to respect her experience and her autonomy. Metaphor opens up possibilities for clients, allowing them to make their own choices for action and change based on their needs at the moment, rather than telling a client explicitly what they should do next.

Metaphor is used to avoid addressing an issue in an intellectual or abstract way. Counsellors in this study often remarked that the use of analytical language and clinical terms can be perceived by clients as insensitive, patronizing or arrogant. It appeared that sometimes counsellors were addressing an issue with metaphor to maintain an affective connection with the client, to keep a human touch.

Bill was counselling a couple who were having bitter arguments over marital goals. Bill recognized a "crazy making" double bind in the couple's communication and wanted to make it explicit. He told them a metaphor about a couple going to dinner and giving each other contradictory messages that resulted in confusion, anger and self-blaming. In the interview Bill said, "With most people an intellectual discussion or upfront description of the double bind doesn't work. Usually through story or some sort of analogy to make explicit the bind they're in helps. With her this is a very emotionally laden situation and to reduce it to some kind of (abstract) double bind and miss all the heartfelt issues she has around this I'd miss the target."

Counsellors who use metaphor as an indirect approach to intervention will often quickly move to metaphor-telling when they sense defensiveness, anxiety, or defiance in their clients' responses. For some counsellors who employ metaphor frequently in their practice the move to metaphor is done pre-reflectively, as a habit. Miles carefully assesses the nonverbal responses (body movement, muscle tension, facial expression) as he approaches a sensitive or emotionally laden issue with a client. In the interviews he disclosed that he was unaware of making a decision to tell metaphors but remembered clearly becoming aware of nonverbals that indicated client discomfort.

Miles was counselling a family who had experienced the sudden loss of the father. Miles told a story from his own personal history of the death of his family dog and how his family handled that loss. In the interview Miles said, "I was watching his(the son's) nonverbals and realized that when I would be too direct with my questions he would become uncomfortable. I was trying to open their relationship up(mother and son), and I felt that's what he wanted as well. But since the family didn't deal with things directly I didn't feel I could deal with things that directly either...Since it was a self-disclosure metaphor I think it helped me become one of the family rather than me being the expert out there telling them how they should grieve or handle their losses."

Metaphor is a way of softening a communication. It speaks more of suggestion than command, of wisdom than expertise, of

sharing than telling. It is gentle persuasion.

Degree of indirection. In avoiding resistance, client discomfort or anxiety by telling metaphors, counsellors choose carefully the content of the metaphors. The degree of indirection desired determines the choice of content for the metaphor. When a family is experiencing difficulty it is sometimes effective to tell a story about another family with the same problem and how they solved their problem. This allows the counsellor to suggest some changes in family functioning without appearing to be telling a family what to do. If the counsellor is being indirect to avoid resistance, seeming too authoritative or expert, this level of indirection may be sufficient. However, with emotionally laden issues or issues that are particularly volatile or threatening, a counsellor often chooses a greater degree of indirection. The counsellor may avoid any similarity to the family in the metaphor, and tell a metaphor which depicts an apparently dissimilar problem in a context farther removed from the content of the family's problem. The general equation here is that the more client resistance, volatility or sensitivity, the more indirect the metaphor. The more indirect the metaphor, the more removed the content of the metaphor from the client's situation. The counsellors in this study told metaphors of varying degrees of indirection, from stories that replicate the dynamics and problems of the client closely (e.g. "I saw a family last week with the same problem...") to stories so far removed from the context of the presenting problem that they were unrecognizable

as analogies (e.g. mystical Zen tales).

These findings concur with the findings of clinicians who have reported on metaphor use with clients. Zeig (1980) reported that Milton Erickson became more indirect and anecdotal the more his clients resisted his ideas. Many writers have reported on the usefulness of metaphor when treatment is impeded by the unwillingness of clients to accept the ideas the counsellor is trying to communicate to them. Clinicians have also reported that indirect communication through metaphor is helpful when the direct expression of ideas would upset clients and damage the relationship between counsellor and client (Barker, 1985). Regarding the degree of indirection, Matthews and Dardeck (1985) summarized the experience of many story-telling clinicians when they wrote that if the metaphor is too obvious to the client he or she may find ways in which the metaphor would not apply. The counsellors in the present study guarded against the dismissal or discounting of their ideas by varying the degree of indirection in their metaphors.

2.Disruption of patterns. Before a counsellor can intervene to disrupt a client's behavior pattern he or she must know the structure of that pattern. The metaphor is a representation, in a new meaning context, of the counsellor's view of the client's problem. It is a replication of the salient aspects of a behavioral pattern that is problematic for the client.

I defined isomorphism as the mirroring in a metaphor of the structure or themes of a client's particular circumstances, i.e., the problem to be addressed. Once an isomorphic relationship has been established between the metaphor and the client's situation, the counsellor can disrupt the pattern by introducing something new in the metaphor. This may be a new connotation or meaning (e.g. reframing metaphors) or a new idea or behavior (e.g. leading metaphors). In introducing these alterations in the metaphor the counsellor's intention is to disrupt the problem behavior pattern as it is enacted or experienced in the client's life.

Miles was counselling a woman whose two teenage daughters were constantly fighting. The mother was more closely aligned with one of her daughters and was constantly intervening in the fights to favor one daughter for fear she would be hurt. Miles wanted to intervene to restore an equality in the sibling holon but sensed resistance from the mother as he broached the topic. He told her the following story:

This story is about two girls. They each had a dog. And they didn't live with each other, these girls, they were good friends. They would visit each other. When one would come over she would bring her dog. The dogs hated each other. They would just "arrrrrgh" you know, like this. You know how dogs, and they'd be ready to kill each other.

So whenever they came down they had to put the dogs in separate rooms. And this went on for a long time. It went on for a year like that. And then one time she came down with her dog and they were in a rush. The girl says we got to get going right away. And the other room wasn't available for the dog.

So they both said, they've talked to each other and said, "Look, we can't live with these dogs like that. If one of them kills the other one, let it kill it. Let's just leave them. Put them in the same room and let's go." So they did that. They went out and saw a movie and had dinner and came back to the house. And they were very scared when they opened the door. And they talked before they opened the door, now what are we going to see, is one of the dogs going to be dead? Is the whole house going to be in a complete mess and wrecked and everything? And they opened the door and what did they see when they looked inside to the living room? They saw the dogs, lying at the fireplace, one with its head on the other one's shoulder. Best of friends.

For one year these two girls had tried to keep them apart and always been in the middle and tried to keep them apart. Then this time they figured, "Well, we're not going to do that anymore. Let the dogs do what they have to do." And the dogs did.

Miles said, "One of the reasons I told the story was that I felt that the mother was aligning with one of the girls and I felt that direct suggestion with her was meeting with resistance as far as pointing that out to her. She's somewhere in the middle there and not allowing the girls to work out their own stuff which they are quite capable of doing...her nonverbals were telling me that there was some resistance when I started to approach her alignment, her being in the middle. So noticing that resistance and the story came to me."

The story was isomorphic to the client's situation in several respects. The parent-child power hierarchy of the family was represented by the master-pet relationship. The presenting problem of the daughters constant fighting was represented by the constant antagonism between the dogs. The mothers constant intervention was paralleled by the masters seperating the dogs. To match the mother's emotional state the story includes the dog master's fears about violence and destruction.

Having established a connection between the story and the client's situation Miles suggested a new response and a new

outcome. The masters left the dogs alone to work out their own conflicts and the dogs did so without violence and became emotionally closer. Miles was also suggesting that the mother focus on her own interests and social life: in the story the dog masters go to dinner and a movie.

The effectiveness of metaphors like this may be realized in at least two different ways. First, the client is implicitly being asked to consider her situation in a new way. The metaphor offers a new conceptualization of the nature of the difficulty and a new response or way of trying to solve the problem. In my example the mother was being asked to consider her intervention in her daughters fighting from a new perspective and to break the pattern by responding differently, i.e., by withdrawing.

Second, clients may remember these stories at those times when the problem pattern reoccurs in the client's life. If the metaphor is isomorphic it is based on patterns in the client's life. When the pattern reoccurs a client may be reminded of the metaphor. The remembering of a story and the directives or suggestions embedded in that story act as a disruption to the pattern. If the client experiments with implementation of the suggestions they disrupt and change a pattern allowing for new responses and solutions to occur. When the conditions in their real life match the conditions depicted in the story, the story comes to mind and they enact the story plot and do something different. Their experience of the problem is reconceptualized in the metaphor and they live out the metaphor, enacting the

metaphor in their real life.

Support for the mnemonic and epistemic function of metaphor is currently being advanced in the literature. Martin (in press) proposed that certain therapeutic events are remembered in relation to schemata in the cognitive, knowledge and experiential structures of clients in such a way that enables these events to be retrieved, rehearsed and utilized outside of the counselling session. Martin hypothesized that dialogues rich in concreteness, vividness, illustration and metaphor are likely to be memorable events which act as catalysts to cognitive restructuring, and to altered patterns of everyday social behavior.

3. Self-awareness and insight. Counsellors in this study believed metaphor can allow a client to increase their awareness of self in their situation, to become aware of their role in the problem, to recognize themselves, or to make cognitive distinctions and clarifications. As I noted in Chapter 4, a metaphor represents the counsellor's view of the most salient or essential aspects of a person's situation, at least, those aspects that are relevant to psychotherapeutic change. Metaphor encapsulates in narrative form the essence of a dilemma, conflict, or problem. This may allow the client to examine and reflect on the problem in a new way. The problem has been removed from its original context and recontextualized within the terms of a metaphor. Hearing one's situation represented in a metaphor, recognizing it as such, may enable one to take some

psychological distance from it. In a sense the problem has been externalized and can be thought about, experienced from a detached or "objective" position or state of mind. One is less "caught up" in the problem.

This detachment from the problem may allow a client to engage in any number of self-awareness initiatives: examine their role in the problem, understand their motivation, take a new position vis a vis the problem, initiate changes in behavior, gain psychological individuation. These are, of course, the objectives of most psychotherapeutic interventions.

Miles was counselling a woman who had separated from her husband but was still coparenting her two children with him. The marital conflict was still overt and was being played out over access issues with the children. Miles told the following metaphor:

In The War of the Roses, what happened in that movie was that they both wanted the house. I mean they didn't need the house. They both had millions, right? But they both wanted the house. And so what they decided to do was one would take half the house and the other would take the other half of the house. And then they split the house up. And their name was the Roses and then it was the war of the Roses. One half of the house

against the other half of the house. If the husband would have said, "Well, take the house, you can have it," game over. But if he did that I guess he felt that he had lost the war. He couldn't do that. And because it took two to play the game. It took two to play that. And because he couldn't do that, because whatever his internal reasons were, pride, and he was always the one who needed control. And he couldn't grow past that where he could just say, "Well, I still care for her, let her have this." And its not a matter of winning or losing anymore. But he couldn't do that. It's really got a pretty horrible ending. If you ever see it, I won't tell you what the ending is. It's quite a movie. But you know, neither one of them could stop playing the game. They couldn't stop. And it's so tragic.

Miles said in the interview, "I wanted her to start taking a meta position and see her side and her role with her husband. For her not to be so enmeshed and just reacting, but instead seeing that she had control over stopping the situation if she so chose...If this metaphor works for her she will realize she still cares for this guy, that she has much more control over the situation than she thinks she does. She will realize that

there could be some very serious consequences for the children if she continues the war against her husband."

I asked Miles how she will develop these realizations. He said, "People remember stories more than anything else in therapy. And I suspect that at home the story will pop up to her at times or when she's with her husband. Just by remembering the story it puts her in a meta position. It distances her from the situation so that instead of reacting, she will think about reacting."

Phil was counselling a woman who had separated from a physically and emotionally abusive spouse. She was maintaining contact with him and feeling upset and guilty because he blamed the failure of the marriage on her "craziness". At one point Phil asked:

So if we went out to Riverview and we pulled someone out of there, and they told you you were crazy, would you take that seriously?

With this brief analogy, Phil was helping his client make a cognitive distinction between the content and the source of the upsetting, guilt-inducing communication. Phil said, "How you choose to take information is very contextual. I was using a stereotypical example of a crazy person out of Riverview(Psychiatric Hospital). You would not go home feeling devastated if they said you were an asshole. You would take it

in the context of who this person is and where they're at. I would hope she could do the same for her ex-partner and recognize that he's not Walter Cronkite."

Metaphor can be a useful and sometimes humorous way to help a client think about a particular aspect of their situation in a different way. Again, the metaphor focuses on particular aspects of a situation, encapsulating them in a new context, and presents them back to the client for their consideration. This use of metaphor helps clients make distinctions, clarify, and get a new or different perspective on their situation.

4. Stimulate unconscious process. Clinicians within the Ericksonian tradition of psychotherapy have hypothesized about the usefulness of metaphor in promoting change through unconscious processes. Erickson and Rossi (1980) hypothesized that metaphor promotes an unconscious search for meaning because the isomorphic patterns in the metaphor stimulate unconscious associations. Metaphor appeals to the conscious mind and at the same time refers to deeply engrained associations, mental mechanisms and learned patterns of behavior, activating these internal responses and making them available for problem solving (Erickson, Rossi & Rossi, 1976). The activation of unconscious associations and responses present the conscious mind with apparently new information and behavioral responses (Erickson & Rossi, 1976).

Counsellors in this study sometimes told metaphors that were quite indirect in an attempt not to suggest a specific action or thought but to stimulate the client's generation of new thoughts and actions. With metaphors of this sort, the counsellor wishes only to promote the process, not determine the outcome, i.e., there is no implied or stated goal or directive other than to have the client engage in the process of generating new responses.

Metaphors used for this purpose are decidedly more "open-ended." The metaphor does not come to an end with a specific embedded directive. Rather, the client is typically left wondering about the meaning of the metaphor, entranced by the imagistic, connotative language. Often these stories read like poetry: they are full of imagery, color, vivid description and symbolism.

Keith was counselling a man who was maintaining his depressive state by continually analysing the things which depressed him. Keith wanted to indirectly suggest there was another way of approaching the problem without telling him what that way was. Keith told a long Zen story using connotative, descriptive language, the final part of which is reprinted here:

Finally, he had this experience when he was meditating, an image of himself running down the road trying to grasp at clouds and always being just out of reach. Suddenly,

something dawned on him ...he walked down the path between his room and the meditation hall and noticed the absolute brilliance of the colors of the flowers, and he could smell the garden, and noticed it seemed like the first time that the sky was blue. And the trees, the way the branches hung and the way the leaves swing in the breeze and suddenly he noticed what was going on around him. And it was a feeling he had solved something, he had done something differently. It seemed like he stopped doing or trying in his old way and the answer became apparent. And I don't know what made me think of that story as you were talking.

Keith said in the interview, "I was suggesting that there is a way (to solve his problem) and it was open ended as to how he's going to do that." On another occasion Keith said, "My notion of learning and my own experience of learning is just being exposed to a number of inputs, conscious and unconscious. Like opening a book at a random place when you have a question and being able to read into it what it is that your unconscious is hoping to communicate, what it is that you need to hear. My notion is that clients sort through the metaphor unconsciously and pick out of it whatever it is they need to hear, whatever is useful for them. And if he has a problem or is wrestling with

something at some level, that there will be something in the metaphor that will give him more information that he can use. And I'm hoping through the strength of our rapport and our relationship that it will have more meaning."

One of the presuppositions that guides counsellor's use of metaphor to stimulate unconscious processes is that the unconscious is a positive, adaptive faculty that promotes growth and adaptive change. Milton Erickson repeated frequently in his long career as a psychotherapist that we must learn to trust the unconscious (Araoz, 1985). I think counsellors using therapeutic metaphor demonstrate this implicit trust in the unconscious when they tell open-ended metaphors with the intention of stimulating the client's unconscious toward generating change rather than directing the client toward any specific change. An underlying assumption seems to be that clients can sometimes generate their own solutions to problems they face. Perhaps a well timed, well aimed metaphor simply activates a process of intrapsychic change.

5. Elicitation of experiential response. Telling a metaphor can be an effective way to elicit an emotional response from a client. Emotion is elicited in metaphor-telling to increase the client's identification with the metaphor and to elicit emotional states that facilitate psychotherapeutic change.

Metaphors that establish an isomorphic relationship with the client on both a cognitive and emotional level may be more

effective. When counsellors are structuring the terms of the metaphor to match those of the client's situation they often mirror the emotional responses that the client experiences in their situation. If the client is experiencing fear and confusion over the presenting issue the protagonist in a metaphoric story will be shown to have these feelings in the story. Counsellors believe this emotional equivalence between story and presenting issue helps the client identify with the protagonist. Clients are engaged more fully in a story when they are engaged both cognitively and emotionally. The metaphor becomes more than new information, it becomes an experience.

A stronger identification with the metaphor enhances the power of the metaphor. For example, when a client has strongly identified with the story protagonist he will be more likely to follow that protagonist into new experiences. In this way counsellors lead their clients to new responses, actions, understandings, solutions.

As counsellors tell metaphors they often attempt to elicit emotional states that facilitate change. Positive emotions like hope, confidence, optimism, curiosity, trust and relaxation were mentioned frequently by counsellors in the Interviews. For example, when the story protagonist successfully resolves her dilemma it elicits an optimistic emotional response, encourages an attitude of hope and optimism that they too can be successful in dealing with their problem.

In this way counsellors use metaphor not so clients can hear about someone else's success at dealing with a problem similar to their own, but so that client's can experience success through a story. When a client is fully engaged (cognitively, emotionally, physiologically) in a story they are experiencing the story. They feel the emotion of the protagonist, suffer their pain, know their fears. And when the protagonist succeeds they experience their joy and satisfaction as their own. This positive emotional state is then directed by the counsellor and utilized by the client toward overcoming difficulties in her own life.

It appeared that counsellors' beliefs bore some similarity to those of Lankton (1985) who called the elicitation of emotional response in clients the 'retrieval of resources.' He found that without the emotional engagement of the client in the metaphor the linking of the client's experience during the metaphor to the goals of therapy was less effective.

Miles was counselling a family who had suffered the loss of their father. Miles told a joining metaphor to empathize with the family and convey the understanding that "losses happen in all families." In the interview he said, "I was hoping (the son in the family) would get more in touch with feelings and so my metaphor was something that happened in childhood so it would be more in touch with feelings. He talked very intellectually rather than from a feeling place. So I wanted to elicit some feelings from him...I saw him as having some (unexpressed)

emotion and just wanted to connect with him as a male as well."

Sometimes a counsellor will use metaphor to elicit an emotional response not only to make a metaphor memorable or to increase the client's identification with the metaphor, but to elicit overt emotional responding during the counselling session. As I have showed with other uses of metaphor, it is a non-threatening approach. Clients who have difficulty expressing feeling over their own situation might have much less difficulty expressing feeling over someone else's situation. Metaphor can make emotional expression safer. The connection between someone else's emotional pain and their own can be made through metaphor. Identifying with the emotion of a character in a story is a gentler way of moving a client toward their own emotional expression. If a client experiences emotion by identifying with the experience of a character in a story it is a gentle step toward their own emotional expression.

Chapter 6

Experience

Introduction

The phenomenological pursuit of human experience seeks to reveal that experience in its depth: its structure, its contextualization, its interpretation (Murray, 1975). To do this the researcher must gain access to the individual's actions as they are viewed by the individual, to his or her structuralizations of the world in the light of these actions, to the affect and cognition that are components of the experience in question.

This chapter focuses on the counsellor's experience of the construction of metaphor: the counsellor's awareness of his mental process preceding and during metaphor construction.

All of the metaphors told by counsellors in this study arose spontaneously in counselling sessions. None of the metaphors were pre-planned or constructed in advance of the counselling session in which they were told. This approach to therapeutic metaphor stands in contradistinction to various authors (Barker, 1985; Gordon, 1978; Lankton & Lankton, 1983) who advocate the careful and deliberate construction of metaphor for clients outside and apart from the ongoing counselling discourse.

There are two different styles of counsellor mental process at the time of metaphor telling in the session. One main

difference between the two styles is the direction of the counsellor's attention which may determine the extent to which they are aware of their inner process. In the 'reflective' process the attention of the counsellor is directed toward their own inner process, i.e., an awareness of their own thoughts, images, sensations and emotions. This reflective process is accompanied by a disengagement from the client, a separation of self from the counselling dialogue, a redirection of the counsellor's attention to their own mentation. The counsellor focuses on their own inner process rather than on the counselling process or the client's process.

In the 'pre-reflective' process the counsellor remains engaged in the counselling discourse largely unaware of their own inner experiencing. Their attention remains focused on the counselling interaction and/or the client's process. There is an absence of self-consciousness.

Reflective and pre-reflective process occurs in all of the four metaphor types explicated in Chapter 4. The metaphors are constructed from personal experience, anecdotes, stories, or figurative language forms the counsellor read somewhere or heard from someone else.

Reflective process

Counsellors share a common experience of the reflective process. The process begins with an awareness of intention. The counsellor wants to intervene with the client to join, reframe,

lead or advise with a metaphor. Then the counsellor seems to initiate an active search for some content with which to realize their intention to tell a metaphor. This is followed by a flow of images and thoughts, typically ones associated with the personal experience of the counsellor. These images provide the content which the counsellor uses to construct the terms of the metaphor.

A variation of this reflective process occurred even more frequently in the counsellors' metaphor-telling. The process began with the counsellor's intention to intervene with a client. Rather than engaging in an active search for content with which to construct a metaphor, a story just appeared in the counsellor's consciousness. These stories were memories of the counsellor, i.e., they were personal experiences in the counsellor's past. Most often these memories were not expressed verbatim, i.e., the counsellors did not describe the exact original experience. Rather, the memory forms the basic structure and content of the metaphor. The degree of alteration, reconstruction or embellishment of the terms of the 'memory come metaphor' varies with the demands of the situation.

In the following report, Keith describes his mental process of developing his awareness of his intention with a client, having an outline of a story in mind, searching for a story around which to present certain interactional dynamics, and spontaneously creating a story in the counselling session.

Keith's intention with a client was "to plant a seed in her unconscious that sometimes what appears to be a failure is not a failure, it's actually just different from what you expected." When I asked Keith about his process of telling this metaphor he said, "I first recognize what needs to be said, or what I would like to say, what I would like to get at with her. And then decide, based on I'm not sure what, that a story would be the best way of communicating that rather than just directly. So having made these decisions, in this instance I didn't have a story, I had nothing. I started out with, "I'm going to tell you a story," and I had no idea what was going to happen next.

I had a notion of her nurturing something and then that something turning out differently, so I had an outline but I had no notion of where it was going to go or how it was going to go from there...I'm looking for a story around which to present certain processes, certain interactional dynamics and attitudes and I'm looking for almost a parable within which to couch those."

It seems clear that Keith's attention preceding the metaphor telling was focused on his own experiencing. He had an awareness that he wanted to present his client with a specific idea about failure and success and had decided to present this idea in the form of a story. His attention continued to be focused on his own process as he searched for the story content with which he could present certain interactional dynamics and attitudes which would be isomorphic to his client's situation.

When Keith re-focused his attention back to himself he "removed" himself from the dialogue with his client. He "pulled back" from the counselling process in which he and his client had developed a shared meaning context through their dialogue. When Keith reflected on his experience preceeding his metaphor-telling he seemed to be goal oriented, as if he were assuming responsibility for what was to happen next in the session. He seemed to become aware of himself as being purposeful in his process.

Keith created a 900 word leading metaphor about a woman who was nurturing a houseplant that would not grow in the way she intended despite her use of various gardening techniques. She consulted horticulturists and botanists but the plant kept growing in a way that was different than what she wanted. Finally, the woman noticed some beautiful offshoots or runners from the plant that were blossoming around the corner from where she had been focused. The metaphor presented themes of nurturing something loved, frustration over unmet expectations, consulting experts, and fixation on one's goals which begin to prevent the original objectives of one's nurturing, all of which were isomorphic to the themes in the client's family. Keith concluded the metaphor by introducing a new idea. He suggested that she may be missing what growth is occuring by focusing too narrowly on her own expectations and that if she broadens her understanding of growth she might be pleasantly surprised by what she notices.

Carol wanted to point out a change she had noticed in a client over time from a depressed, unemployed person to a happier woman with a brighter future. She presented an image of a charwoman like the actress Carol Burnett once played on television and contrasted that with an image of a happy child. Carol said, "I was kind of scrambling for that one. Again I wanted to express something that would symbolize where she felt she has been at all of her adult life as long as she can remember. And I had the notion of toiling away at sweeping dust...because you can never really sweep away dust. It just hangs in the air and then it settles back down again. So, that kind of futility. As I was thinking about this movement of pushing the broom... I crossed over into that part about Carol Burnett that I used to watch as a kid...And then my memories of Carol Burnett as a kid is watching it with this lady who used to take care of us, who was to me never really successful in the outside world. She was just our housekeeper for ten years...it just kind of all stewed around in there together."

This "stewing around," this collage of associated personal memory images was the genesis of the terms of the metaphor presented to the client. Essentially, Carol told her mental images to her client. She molded these images into a conceptually coherent sequence of images and expressed them verbally to her client.

Bill was counselling a woman who had a history of abusive relationships with men. He told her a metaphor with the

intention of helping her develop an understanding of the concept of patterns in her relationships.

It's sorta like if you, you know, you may think you're driving your car using a different map, but maybe you're using the same map, in certain situations, over and over again. So I want to know what map you're using and see if we can look at different routes on the road.

Bill said he is sometimes aware he is searching for a metaphor that must be produced quickly. He said to himself, "Well, Bill, shit, let's get more concrete here, let's come up with an example really fast about patterns." Then he described his experience of the search for a metaphor. "The experience is very similar to when you're playing those stupid games like charades. It's no different. You're trying to make something happen and words pop into your head, or images. Yeah, images sometimes. I had an image of driving to Calgary, for some reason. All kinds of words that were associated with that experience, or images. The Rocky Mountains and stuff like that. I don't know why but that was part of it. So I get all this shit with it, roadmap, Calgary, driving to Calgary, Rocky Mountains. I think what I remember most about that is I was starting to think about driving and trips and stuff like that."

"So that was the process for me. I had a goal in my head. I wanted to illustrate, define what I mean by patterns and secondly, to show that you need to pay attention here too. Like, patterns are kind of fucking you up. And those were the things in my head that I was aware of consciously and the rest kind of popped into my head."

As we saw in a previous example with Carol, Bill became aware of a number of associated personal memory images as he was trying to find a metaphor to tell his client. Bill seems to have used these memories as the basis for the construction of a brief metaphor about patterns. He didn't share his personal memories of his trip to Calgary but adapted the general themes of travelling by car using roadmaps to match isomorphically the client's repetitive abusive relationships with men and to introduce the notion of choosing a new route.

Pre-reflective process

Metaphors which result from a pre-reflective process occur in an immediate way. There is no conscious awareness of intention to intervene with a client (i.e., join, reframe, lead, or advise), no intention to tell a metaphor and no conscious search for content (images, ideas) with which to construct a metaphor. The metaphor simply appears in the consciousness of the counsellor and is spoken.

Metaphors resulting from pre-reflective process seem to emerge from the counsellor's evolving understanding of the client. These metaphors seem to be a manifestation of the counsellor's process of understanding. The counsellor shares these metaphors as a helpful way of responding to his clients.

Keith was counselling a woman who was individuating from her mother. He told her a story about himself and his struggle to individuate from his father. When I asked Keith about his mental process around the time of the story he said, "It felt like an association to a feeling that I had, an association to what she might be experiencing, where she might get stuck, and from that association popped out this story. I would say my process was quite unconscious. It was quite a spontaneous story."

On another occasion Keith was counselling a woman who had some "unfinished business" with her children. Keith told her a story about himself and his grandmother expressing some heartfelt concerns and thus completing some unfinished business. I asked Keith about his mental process preceding the delivery of the story. He said, "This one was an association with the feeling of unfinished business and the solution that the resolution of unfinished business had in my own life and wanting to present that...In this moment I'm not thinking this is a message I want to give her and I need to find a story to do it. This is more just being in tune with her, and then what comes up for me in that place is this story. So, less of a conscious seeking or having a message that I needed to deliver, rather it

was just, I suppose I identified with her and that story coming to mind seemingly of its own.

Miles was counselling a family in which the father had left the family and told a story about how his own family handled the death of the family dog. When I asked Miles about his process he said, "I don't know. It just came to me, that story. It wasn't something I planned. (In the session) I visualized myself crying when I had lost my dog and I probably saw him as well having some emotion and just wanting to connect with him as a male as well."

As these three instances drawn from my Interviews indicate, the counsellors seemed largely unaware of their own experiential process preceding the metaphor-telling. They could not recollect making a conscious decision to introduce a conceptualization or to tell a metaphor. Their descriptions of their intentions and experiential process seemed somewhat vague and tentative. It appeared that in these instances counsellors' awareness was not focused on their own experiencing. The focusing of attention on oneself, characteristic of the 'reflective' process, did not seem to occur in these instances of metaphor-telling.

Bill was counselling a couple and told a brief metaphor. In the interview he said, "I'm just sitting right there sharing my experience with the client. I'm right there with the client. When images come to mind I often share them with people...unless

its a dangerous or disrespectful image."

This seemed to be the common experience of counsellors when their metaphor-telling was preceded by pre-reflective process. They were "right there with their clients." The counsellor's attention seemed to remain focused on the client and the counselling discourse, not on their own experiential process.

A variation of this pre-reflective process occurred sometimes with the extended metaphorical forms, i.e., anecdotes and stories. The process begins when the counsellor is engaged in interactive dialogue with a client and an image comes to mind. The counsellor then becomes intentional about the image, elaborating and shaping the image into a metaphor by which the counsellor tries to achieve a therapeutic goal.

In one of the Interviews, Phil said, "The longer metaphors have a storytelling quality to them. Although they do just pop into mind there is intention once that happens." Phil contrasted this with his entirely pre-reflective metaphors in which there was no intentional process. "The shorter metaphors just kind of 'poof', pop into mind. I say it and think what you will. It's almost like I'm talking to myself, really. Just spewed out of my mouth without any forethought or afterthought."

Miles was counselling a woman who experienced anger toward her mother and was feeling that her mother was responsible for her anger. Miles also thought that this mother-daughter dynamic was beginning to reoccur between his client and her own children

Miles told her a metaphor:

You know, I have an uncle who has some children and they've all grown up now and he decided that the children were all angry at him for some things. So he decided that the best way for him to just work this out would be to have each of the children come down, and they live all over the United States, and when they want to they could come down and they could spend as much time as they wanted to telling him all the things they didn't like about him as a father. And all he would do is listen. He wouldn't defend himself at all.

So he did that. I always thought he was a perfect father. I knew him, I always thought he was a perfect father. When I looked at him from another family I thought he was a wonderful father. And all these children they came down one after another. One of them spent a couple of weeks telling him things that they didn't like, one weekend after another. And he just listened. And I'm not sure what happened.

I remember the last time I talked to him and he says things like, "You know, I can't tell my children anything." He says, "You know, I can see so clearly what way they should do something, but if I tell them they do exactly the opposite of what I tell them." He said, "It's like they have to learn on their own." And they got all this stuff off their chest. But I think the key was when he started telling them, "Well I did the best I could. And I'm sorry for the things I did wrong. And now you're gonna have to make your own mistakes. " More than anything else that was probably the most critical. That the children had to stop having somebody to blame everything on.

In the Interview Miles claimed the story, "just came to mind." He had no recollection of an intention to intervene or to construct a metaphor. However, once he began to tell his client the story he clearly became intentional about his goals, altering the terms of his personal memory of his uncle's story to fit the requirements of his intention. Miles said, "I added a few twists in the story for her. I wanted her to start seeing her mother as more human, and herself as more human, and connecting those two. I added the part about my uncle being 'the perfect father' just as other people would see her mother being

the perfect mother, just as she would think other mothers were perfect mothers. And the other part I changed was him telling his children that they were responsible for their own behavior. I don't remember my uncle saying that but I changed the story for the benefit of my client."

Chapter 7

Discussion

Introduction

This chapter presents a sketch of the interrelationship of intentions, beliefs, and experience in counsellors' metaphor-telling. My conclusions are compared with the findings of recent studies of metaphor and emphasize the affective dimension in clinical metaphor-telling.

Beliefs and intentions

Counsellor intentions always occur in a specific meaning context developed by counsellor and client. When a counsellor has an intention to intervene and employs a metaphor to communicate that intention, it is intended for the client to do something specific upon hearing the metaphor, i.e., to experience something or to behave in a particular way.

The counsellors' assumptions about how clients experience their metaphors and how and when they are effective interventions structure the counsellors' beliefs about clinical metaphor-telling. The conceptualization of intention developed in this thesis, when applied to the categories of counsellors' introspections revealed in this study, would dictate that these beliefs, when combined with certain counsellor conditions (emotional and physical state), certain conditions in the environment (the clinical situation), and a desire for

something, give rise to an intention.

This conceptualization seemed to explain the counsellors' distinctions between intentions and beliefs. In the Interviews, counsellors' reports on both their intentions and beliefs were specific to the particular clinical situation in which they occurred. The most common phenomenon in counsellors' reports was a continuous fluid movement between different levels of abstraction as they spoke about their metaphor use. A typifying example occurred when one counsellor responded to my question about how his client would utilize the metaphor by saying, "I intended for it to be utilized to shatter crystallizations of reality. So every time she says, 'How was your day, dear?' and he says, 'Fine', and she gets pissed off thinking, 'What do you mean, fine. Nothing can be fine. The world is full of problems. We're all full of problems. We're all psychopathic.' At some level I'm saying 'You're giving a clear message there, mister, but she is hearing something different.' Again, it's to help them stop seeing communications as linear. I'm shattering one crystallization and opening doors to different realities." The counsellor first gave a general principle (belief) about how metaphors can work, then moved to the level of the specific clinical situation, and then returned to a more abstract level of thinking again.

Counsellors also demonstrated this back and forth movement to different levels of abstraction in response to my questions on intentions. For example, one counsellor said his intention

for telling the metaphor was "...to convey the importance of identifying patterns...and I'm saying to her you're getting screwed up... its the same thing thing over and over." Again, the counsellor reported a belief about how metaphors work and then immediately followed with the particular application of this belief in the specific clinical situation.

An a priori assumption of this study was that a counsellor's beliefs about metaphor use play a role in the etiology of counsellors' intentions to use metaphor with clients. The counsellors' reports suggest that they do sometimes consult their beliefs as they construct clinical metaphors. One counsellor reported her process of having an intention in the following manner, "I cast about in my head for another system of people that they would understand, that can serve the purposes of clarifying their roles and distancing them a bit from their past to take on a new notion of what their family could be. The notion of a baseball team came up first...they all have their bases to cover and they throw the ball back and forth but the captain is always in charge and watched over it to make sure the team's working really well. Be able to respond to the balls that come at it like the stressors in life...and they work together and they go to the captain for help..." This report demonstrated that the counsellor was aware of an explicit belief in the heuristic and epistemic function of metaphor for her client before constructing the terms of the metaphor to tell the family she was counselling.

In other reports counsellors claimed no awareness of intentions or consultation of beliefs preceding their metaphor-telling. This style of metaphor-telling was conceptualized as 'pre-reflective' in this study. One counsellor reflected on the relationship between beliefs, intentions and metaphors by characterizing a "grid" of tacit beliefs that played an etiological role in the generation of metaphors. "Usually an image pops into mind and I discover that its analogous. There's so many different levels. There's a grid that's in my head when I walk into the (consulting) room. Look for exceptions to the problem...look for things that decontextualize...take the issue in another context. I'm always doing that and searching and while I'm doing that images pop into my mind. When my goals with clients [i.e., the counsellor's "grid" of beliefs] and the images connect I often share them...There's images coming to mind all the time and I think when they mate with some of the goals I'm attending to at a conscious level then voila, I've got statements, I've got metaphors and stuff."

Muran and DiGiuseppe (1990) hypothesized that a counsellor-told metaphor has value only as a heuristic and epistemic device. As a heuristic, metaphor provided a means of organizing information into an orderly, logical sequence of ideas and images that is highly memorable. As an epistemic device, metaphor permits the altering of the language and meaning that clients apply to the organization and understanding

of the world. In these authors' cognitivist formulation they limit metaphor use to describing an awareness or idea which may then generate new patterns of awareness.

In this study counsellors' use of metaphor to introduce new ideas or to reframe client conceptualizations constituted a major use of clinical metaphor. Counsellors intentions and beliefs about their metaphor use clearly indicated the conceptualization of metaphor as having heuristic and epistemic value.

The second major use of metaphor by the counsellors in this study concerned not the cognitive but the affective dimension of counselling. Metaphor was often used for its instrumental value in addressing emotional functioning. Counsellors used metaphors to avoid a defensive response from clients, i.e., avoiding client resistance; to avoid eliciting anxiety or emotional pain, i.e., avoiding client reactivity to emotionally sensitive issues; and to elicit positive emotions in order to increase both the client's identification with metaphors and the client's motivation to overcome the difficulties in their life. These instrumental uses of metaphor to address affective functioning facilitate the heuristic and epistemic functions of clinical metaphors.

The findings of this study also indicate that counsellors use metaphor with the intention to address emotional experiencing as a goal in itself. Counsellors' intentions for

using joining metaphors directly addressed the emotional experiencing of clients. In joining metaphors the counsellors were comforting their clients, empathizing with their affective state and trying to elicit feelings of relief, relaxation, and optimism. As well, clinical experience suggests that joining with a client at the level of their affective experiencing can intensify that experience or focus the counselling discourse on the emotional experiencing of the client. It appeared from this study that cognitive formulations about metaphor-use have excluded what appeared to be a major area of counsellors' thinking and intervening with clinical metaphors, i.e., the affective dimension of client experience.

Reflective and pre-reflective experience

The metaphor-telling style of counsellors influenced by the Ericksonian tradition of metaphorical communication is characterized by the *intentional* use of metaphor. The "intentional stance" implies the viewing of self and others as rational agents, each with beliefs and intentions and other mental operations (Dennett, 1988). A counsellor assumes an intentional stance toward a client when he assumes a 'counsellor as agent' role, acting to bring about psychotherapeutic change in the client. When counsellors' metaphors are generated from the reflective process they are operating from an intentional stance.

Brooks (1985) promoted an intentional stance when he proposed that if a clinician possessed a good understanding of particular therapeutic issues that could be addressed effectively through metaphors, the clinician could introduce a metaphor that would resonate with the client's inner world. Brooks hypothesized that if a metaphor is "on target" the client may use and modify their counsellor's metaphors so they are increasingly experienced as their own. In this study counsellors often used metaphor in this way, particularly in the positive reframing and leading metaphors, i.e., they often intended clients to experience the counsellor-told metaphor as their own.

In contrast, metaphors that result from pre-reflective experience may be understood as an emergent phenomenon resulting from the ongoing interaction between counsellor and client. In the Interviews counsellors reported no awareness of an intention to intervene with, or to tell a metaphor to their clients in pre-reflective metaphor-telling. The metaphor simply came to mind in the course of the interaction in the session.

When counsellors reflected on their experience in the Interviews, phrases like "just being *in tune* with the client" and "I'm *right there* sharing my experience" were used to describe this experience. The counsellor's attention seemed to be focused on the client at those times and there appeared to be an absence of self-consciousness. They had no awareness of an intention to intervene, an intention to tell a metaphor, and no awareness of images, thoughts or memories with which to

construct a metaphor. The counsellors did not know how the metaphors came about. They just happened.

Angus and Rennie (1988) explored metaphor in counselling process and reported similar findings. In their study both counsellor and client described their experiences of metaphoric expression as being spontaneous wherein they discovered what they were going to say as they spoke. Angus and Rennie conceptualized a collaborative relationship between counsellor and client in which both were attuned to their own experiential responses. In this collaborative relationship, counsellor and client coelaborated the meaning of a spoken metaphor which evolved by means of an interpretive dialogue. The coelaboration entailed an awareness of and articulation of a rich, experiential array of associated images, reflections and memories.

The findings of this study only partially support Angus and Rennie's (1988) conceptualization. Counsellors did seem to be engaged in a process of elaborating inner experiencing in their metaphor-telling. However, the most vivid array of images, thoughts, and memories occurred when counsellors were conscious of an intention to intervene and were trying to construct an appropriate metaphor. This 'reflective' process of producing metaphors was not characterized by a spontaneous elaboration of a spoken metaphor which evolved from an interactive dialogue as Angus and Rennie suggested. Rather, the counsellor seemed to "pull back" from the interactive dialogue, became aware of his

intention, focused his attention on his own experiential process and began a monologue, i.e., a story or anecdote.

Counsellors in this study did seem to engage in the elaboration of inner experiencing in their metaphor-telling. One counsellor reported that his metaphor arose from "an association with the feeling of unfinished business." The counsellor's own experience of "unfinished business" seemed to be "triggered" by his client's "unfinished business" with her mother and the counsellor experienced personal memories which resulted in a metaphor-telling. Another counsellor described a spontaneous memory amidst an interactive dialogue with his client in which the counsellor "visualized himself crying when he lost his dog." The memory was immediately spoken to the client who was experiencing a sudden loss in his family. In another Interview, a counsellor said, "I'm not sharing metaphor so much as sharing my experience with the client. I guess they are metaphorical stories but they really happened to me. I remember feeling what she is feeling now." These descriptions were characteristic of the pre-reflective process of metaphor-telling in which the counsellor had no conscious intention to intervene or tell a metaphor.

Metaphors that are generated from pre-reflective process appear to emerge not from the cognitive but more from the affective dimension of the counsellor's experiencing. Counsellors' descriptions of their experience preceding and during pre-reflective metaphor generation indicate a strong

affective connection with the client's experiencing. Counsellors appeared to be experientially absorbed in the client's experiencing to the exclusion of self-awareness or reflective thought.

Some researchers (Angus & Rennie, 1988; Muran & DiGiuseppe, 1990) have warned that telling metaphors in a didactic fashion may create a misunderstanding between counsellor and client that damages the counselling relationship. However, it may be the affective, not the cognitive dimension that is operative in this phenomena. Metaphors generated from reflective process, in which the counsellor assumes an intentional stance toward the client, may risk weakening the affective connection with the client. Is it possible that a counsellor who maintains a strong affective connection with the client's experiencing could tell any metaphor, simple or complex, without losing that connection? In terms of clinical impact and effectiveness of metaphor it may be less important for a counsellor to be "on target" with a metaphor than for the metaphor, whatever it's quality, to be received by the client within an interpersonal relationship characterized by affective connectedness.

Some clinicians experienced in metaphor-telling might argue that part of the expertise involved is the ability to maintain an affective connection while telling the metaphor. However, I am alluding here to a more subtle, underlying dimension of human interactivity that precedes skill or expertise or the ability of counsellors to do two things at the same time. It is probable

that clients experience differently a metaphor spoken by a counsellor who has elaborated his inner experiencing in relation to an affective connection with the experiencing of the client, from a metaphor spoken by a counsellor who has assumed an affectively "detached" intentional stance.

As counsellors, we are sometimes caught between our overt desire to tell metaphors that will influence our clients toward positive change (and our desire to be effective helpers), and our concern over the possible risks to our counselling relationship with clients. After telling a mystical Zen tale to a client, a counsellor told me in an Interview, "Maybe I was way off the mark with that metaphor, maybe unconsciously I was on. I don't know. Maybe the metaphor is too obscure. It's not joining her where she's coming from and it's too far out. But it's a story that came up for me in session and sometimes things that come up in session seem illogical. They seem out of sync with the real world. I was in the middle of a session with her and things were happening and that's the story that came out. And that's the story that she might remember. And she might get something out of it that's totally different from what I had in mind."

Perhaps that description epitomizes every counsellor's struggle between the desire to stay affectively connected with the client's experience, and the desire to act with intention, assuming responsibility for initiating interventions that will facilitate psychotherapeutic change for the client.

Future research. As this study examines clinical metaphor-telling only from the perspective and experience of the counsellor, no hypotheses will be advanced as to the efficacy of metaphors generated from pre-reflective process versus reflective process. Further studies might explore the two experiential styles of counsellors' clinical metaphor-telling. In particular, an exploration of the significance of these two styles in terms of experience, intentions, and clinical impact and effectiveness from the perspective of both client and counsellor.

Summary

Counsellors' intentions for telling clinical metaphors were categorized into four types: joining, reframing, leading, and advising. Reframing and leading metaphors were employed as heuristic and epistemic devices to influence and change clients' experiencing and acting. Advising metaphors were used only as heuristic devices to influence clients' thinking. Joining metaphors were directed at the emotional experiencing of clients and were intended to be comforting.

Counsellors hold a variety of beliefs about the effectiveness and clinical impact of clinical metaphors. On some occasions counsellors are aware of, and seem to consult these beliefs as they engage in a process of forming and acting on intentions. It was suggested that on other occasions counsellors' beliefs are operative in an implicit way, as a set

of tacit beliefs that guide the counsellor's actions.

There were two different counsellor experiential processes that generated metaphors. Reflective process was characterized by an experiential disengagement from the client and a redirection of the counsellor's attention to his or her own intentions, experiencing, and metaphor-telling. Pre-reflective process was characterized by an experiential engagement with the client, an absence of intention and reflection, and the elaboration of inner experiencing in a spoken metaphor.

Appendix

Stimulated Recall Interview

Directions: Rewind the tape to 60 seconds before the metaphor begins. Stop the tape as soon as the counselor finishes the metaphor. Then ask the following questions of the counselor. Tape record this interview for later transcription on the protocol report.

(A) Is this an individual, couple or family?

(B) What is the presenting problem(s)?

1.(a) What did you intend for your client(s) to do/think/feel upon hearing the therapeutic metaphor?

(b) Did you intent for your client(s) to do/think/feel anything else upon hearing your metaphor?(after counselor has responded).

2. Describe the counseling issue or situation you were addressing with the metaphor?

3. How does the metaphor address the counselling problem or situation for which it was told, i.e., how do the characters/actions/events, the terms or set of relations in the metaphor apply or relate to your client's situation?

4. Describe the process of having the intention, i.e., how did you create/develop/become aware of the metaphor in the session?

5. What is the source of this metaphor, i.e., did you create it, read it in a book, hear it somewhere, experience it in your own past?

6. Describe how you think the metaphor you told functions as a metaphor for your client(s)? In other words, how did the therapeutic metaphor work?

Reflections

And what you thought you came for
Is only a shell, a husk of meaning.
From which the purpose breaks only when it is fulfilled
If at all. Either you had no purpose
Or the purpose is beyond the end you figured
And is altered in fulfillment.

T.S.Eliot

Little Gidding

The Dry Salvages, 1941

Four Quartets

Much of what we discover, the poets already knew.

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