Anglo-North American qualitative counseling and psychotherapy research

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This and the following article by Joerg Frommer, Michael Langenbach, and Ulrich Streeck jointly address regional developments in qualitative psychotherapy research.

The Editors

ANGLO-NORTH AMERICAN QUALITATIVE COUNSELING AND PSYCHOTHERAPY RESEARCH

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Qualitative counseling and psychotherapy research produced in the United Kingdom and in Canada and the United States is examined. It is shown that the methods and methodologies in the British research have been influenced by postmodern epistemology more than in North American work, which reflects a greater effect of positivism. Correspondingly, it is shown that a higher value has been placed on methods in the latter region compared with the former. The differences are discussed in terms of the way the field of counseling has developed in the United Kingdom compared with the United States and Canada. Also discussed are the tensions between realism and relativism and, correspondingly, between positive valuing of method and skepticism. The article concludes with thoughts about the implications of qualitative research for the field of counseling and psychotherapy as a whole.

In the past 35 years, alternatives to the statistical analysis of quantified findings have developed and have become common in the social sciences. Proponents maintain that the social sciences should be about meaning and that meaning is conveyed by language better than by numbers. Collectively, these alternative approaches have come to be known as qualitative research. Some of these approaches focus on the meaning and structure of language use, such as discourse analysis (e.g., Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter & Wetherell, 1987) and conversation analysis (e.g., Labov & Fanshel, 1977). In a related vein, the narrative form of

language use has given rise to the analysis of this form in particular (e.g., Mishler, 1986; Polkinghorne, 1995). Also to be included in the broad group of approaches to language analysis is the ethnomethodological approach developed by Garfinkel (1967), entailing experiments that disrupt social conduct to expose the tacit rules governing it. Alternatively, other methods are directed to the study of the meaning of experience assumed to be represented by language, as in the grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), empirical phenomenological (e.g., Giorgi, 1970) and ideal type analysis (e.g., Stuhr & Wachholz, 2001) methods. There are many variations in all of these approaches as well. Thus, for example, heuristic inquiry formulated by Moustakas (1990) is a modification of empirical phenomenology. The consensual qualitative research approach described by Hill, Thompson, and Williams (1997) is based on an alteration of the grounded theory method (Elliott et al., 1994). Case story analysis (Frommer & Langenbach, 2001) originates from ideal type analysis and narrative analysis.

Within the discipline of psychology, counseling and psychotherapy researchers have played an important role in the application of qualitative research methods, as indicated in a historical study by Rennie, Watson, and Monteiro (2002). The purpose of the current article is to examine what has taken place in this regard in the United Kingdom, United States, and Canada in terms of English language publications. It is written as a companion to the article by Frommer, Langenbach, and Streeck (2004) on qualitative therapy research produced in European, German-speaking countries.

There are both similarities and differences in the English-language qualitative counseling and psychotherapy research conducted on the two sides of the Atlantic. On the one hand, there have been and continue to be close collaboration and ties between American and British researchers, resulting in the development of methods (e.g., Elliott & Shapiro, 1992; Llewelyn, Elliott, Shapiro, Hardy, & Firth-Cozens, 1988; Stiles et al., 1990). On the other hand, some interesting differences have emerged in Britain versus the United States and Canada in terms of epistemology (theory of knowledge), methodology (theory of method), and method. At the method level, these differences became evident in the just-mentioned historical study, indicating that the incidence of the search term *grounded theory* in the PsycINFO electronic database was approximately 12 times more frequent in publications coming out of the United States and Canada compared with Britain and Ireland, whereas the search term *discourse analy** was only twice as frequent (Rennie et al., 2002). Although this disparity is less pronounced in the case of counseling and therapy research, it is nevertheless sufficiently large to merit attention.

The intent of this article is to give an overview of what I see as main trends, especially in terms of epistemologies, methodologies, and methods. Also, as explained later in more detail, I avoid going over the ground already covered in previous and forthcoming reviews, especially in terms of research findings. I begin by taking stock of the methods that have either been adopted or developed in the United Kingdom and in Canada and the United States and comment on the epistemologies and methodologies supporting them. I describe some of the returns that have come from the various approaches. I then discuss how a key organizational difference in Britain compared with the United States and Canada has contributed to a greater allowance of postmodern thinking in the United Kingdom (for postmodernism in the social sciences, see Rosenau, 1992). It also includes some thoughts about the place of qualitative therapy research in the context of therapy research as a whole.

Epistemologies, Methodologies, and Methods

Tables 1 and 2 provide an outline of the qualitative psychotherapy research studies that have been produced in the United Kingdom and in the United States and Canada, respectively. Focusing first on method, the studies taken as whole have involved two main approaches: (a) methods directed to the analysis of verbal reports on experience and (b) methods applied to the analysis of therapy transcripts.

Methods Directed to the Analysis of Verbal Reports on Experience

A feature of the qualitative research involving verbal report is that it usually, although not necessarily, is conducted in a discovery-oriented, open-ended manner. The medium may be a written response to a written question or a verbal response to a question given in a research interview. The "pure form" of open-ended inquiry is the unstructured interview or questionnaire, in which participants address a topic presented to them as they see fit. This form contrasts with the semistructured interview or questionnaire, in which the respondent is given a set of prepared questions with an opportunity to make additional comments.

Another feature of the verbal report studies is that they can be distinguished according to whether or not they involve use of interpersonal process recall (IPR; Kagan, 1984). In the usual approach to research interviewing, the interviewer has asked for recollections, views, judgments, and so on regarding the topic of interest. Alternatively, in IPR, recollections have been enhanced by the replay to the psycho-therapy research participant of an audiotape or videotape of a unit of therapy recently experienced by the participant, whether the unit was a particular moment of therapy or an entire session. Akin to the usual type of interview, IPR interviewing can be done in either an unstructured (Rennie, 1995) or structured (Elliott, 1986) manner, in which the open-ended involvement parallels that of the regular unstructured interview.

Methods Applied to the Analysis of Therapy Transcripts

The transcript material is analyzed in one of two ways. The first focuses on the pragmatics of discourse between clients and therapists (i.e., on therapeutic dis-course as performance). In this approach, functional analyses are applied to the surface of the text. Attention has been paid to how the responses of speakers affect each other as the speakers take turns in conversation. This focus has made visible the role of values, prejudices, and power in discourse. In its more radical form, this kind of discourse analysis has taken a noncognitive, social perspective. Alterna-tively, transcript material has been studied in a perspective organized by a particu-lar theory of counseling or therapy in the interest of demonstrating how the theory applies to it.

Overall, although as indicated there has been much in common in the work coming out of the two regions, the differences justify studying them separately.

Work in the United Kingdom

Methods are based on various methodologies supported by different epistemol-ogies. Although mainstream British psychology appears to be positivist as much as

TABLE 1. Selected British Qualitative Psychotherapy Research Studies: Focus Mainly on Application

Study	Method	*N*	Topic
Ankrah (2002)	HI	3 Cs	Spiritual emergency, counseling
Arthern & Madill (1999)	GT	6 Ts	Transition objects
Arthern & Madill (2002)	GT	6 Cs	Transition objects
Balamoutsou & McLeod (1996, 2001)	NA	1 dyad	NA methodology
Churchill & Bayne (2001)	Interpretive phenomenology	15 Ts	Psychol. type/empathy
Clarkson (1995, 1996)	Discursive thematic analysis	Writings	Therapeutic relationship
Etherinton (2000, 2001)	NA	2 Cs	Male victims of sexual abuse
Grafanaki & McLeod (1999)	NA	6 dyads	Helping/hindering events
Grafanaki & McLeod (2001)	NA, GT	6 dyads	Experiential congruence
Howe (1989, 1996)	GT	32 families	Experience of family therapy
Madill (1996)	DA	—	Discursive psychother. research
Madill & Barkham (1997)	DA	1 dyad	One successful case of therapy
Madill & Doherty (1994)	DA/reflection	1 dyad	Discourse analytic methodology
Madill et al. (2001)	DA	—	Discourse analytic methodology
McLeod & Lynch (2000)	NA	1 C	Stong eval. in therapy narrative
Reeves & Mintz (2001)	GT variant	4 Ts	Working w/suicidal clients
Ryden & Loewenthal (2001)	Po-mo experiential analysis	6 Cs	Psychotherapy for lesbians
Tune (2001)	GT variant	6 Ts	Validity of touch in therapy
West (1997)	HI & GT	7 Ts	Integrating healing, psychotherapy
West (1998)	HI	18 Ts	Impact of spiritual beliefs on work

Note. HI = heuristic inquiry; GT = grounded theory; NA = narrative analysis; DA = discourse analysis; Po-mo = postmodern; Cs = clients; Ts = therapists.

TABLE 2. Selected Canadian–American Psychotherapy Qualitative Research Studies: Focus Mainly on Application

Study	Method	*N*	Type
Angus & Rennie (1988)	GT + EP	4 dyads	Coconstruction of metaphor
Angus & Rennie (1989)	GT + EP	4 dyads	C's experience of metaphor
Bachelor (1995)	EP (content analysis)	65 Cs	C's perception of ther. alliance
Bolger (1999)	GT	7 Cs	Resolving emotional pain
Cummings et al. (1994)	NA	10 Cs	Change in short-term counseling
Elliott & Shapiro (1992)	CPA	1 dyad	Significant event in therapy
Fischer et al. (2001)	EP	Varied Cs, Ts	20 dissertations on ther. summarized
Frontman & Kunkel (1994)	GT	69 Ts	Ts' construals of success
Gelso et al. (1999)	CQR	11 Ts	Recollections of transference
Hayes et al. (1998)	CQR	8 Ts	Views on countertransference
Knox et al. (1997)	CQR	13 Cs	Helpful/hindering events
Knox et al. (1999)	CQR	13 Cs	Internal representations of Ts
Levitt (2001, 2002a, b)	CQR	7 Cs	Cs' experience of pauses
McMullen (1989)	GT	2 Cs × 3 Ts	Metaphor usage & success in T
Rasmussen & Angus(1996, 1997)	DA, GT	4 Cs	Metaphor borderline, nonborderline Cs
Rennie (1992)	GT	14 Cs	Cs' experience of therapy session
Rennie (1994a)	GT	14 Cs	Cs' resistance in therapy
Rennie (1994b)	GT	14 Cs	Cs' deference in therapy
Rennie (1994c)	GT	14 Cs	Cs' storytelling in therapy
Rennie (2000a)	GT	1 C	Aspects of C's control of therapy
Rennie (2001)	GT	14 Cs	C as self-aware agent in therapy
Rhodes et al. (1994)	Proto-CQR	13 Ts	Misunderstanding events in therapy
Stiles et al. (1990, 1992)	DA	1 C	Demonstrations/assimilation model
Stiles & Angus (2001)	DA + NA	1 C	Metaphor/assimilation model
Walsh (1995)	H	21 Ts	Values in psychotherapy
Walsh et al. (1999)	H	31 Ts	Values in psychotherapy
Watson & Rennie (1994)	GT	8 Cs	Resolving problematic reactions

Note. GT = grounded theory; EP = empirical phenomenology; NA = narrative analysis; CPA = comprehensive process analysis; CQR = consensual qualitative research; DA = discourse analysis; H = hermeneutics; Cs = clients; Ts = therapists.

it is in the United States and Canada, qualitative counseling and therapy research in the United Kingdom has been influenced by postmodern thought to a greater extent than has been the case in North America. This postmodernism is evident prominently in the writings of Madill et al. The discourse analytic methodology developed by Potter et al. (e.g., Edwards & Potter, 1992; Potter & Wetherell, 1987) has been used as to analyze discourse between the client and the therapist. This methodology draws on notions of social constructionism (e.g., Gergen, 1985), subject positioning (see Madill & Barkham, 1997), interpretative repertoires (Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984), and ideological dilemmas (Billig et al., 1988) as major influences. Madill et al. addressed methodological and methodical considerations in a series of publications (Madill, 1996; Madill & Barkham, 1997; Madill, Widdicombe, & Barkham, 2001). By the same token, in a thoughtful article, Madill and Doherty (1994) surmised that, although the poststructural dismissal of the agency of individuals is viable when social structures are addressed, it is questionable when conversations between clients and therapists are the focus. A 2000 article indicates sensitivity to alternative epistemologies (Madill, Jordan, & Shirley, 2000).

McLeod has made a similar shift (cf. Mearns & McLeod, 1984; McLeod, 1997, 2001). In his development of narrative analysis (McLeod & Balamoutsou, 1996, 2001), McLeod has drawn on social constructionism (e.g., Gergen, 1985, 1994) and on the idea of *bricolage*, or developing/applying any method to complete the job (see Lincoln & Denzin, 1994). Indeed, McLeod challenged the concept of method, advocating that we should forget it (McLeod, 2001), a dramatic way of urging that we should be not be bound by procedures.

Rebellion against the more procedural approaches to qualitative research is also evident in the works of West and Etherington. In his initial work, West (1996) drew on Reason's human inquiry approach to action research (e.g., Reason & Heron, 1986; Reason & Rowan, 1981) for guidance on how to conduct an inquiry group, the returns from which were analyzed with the grounded theory method (West, 1997). Later, however, he had second thoughts about this method, holding that it unduly crimps the researcher's subjectivity. He turned to Moustakas's (1990) heuristic inquiry method, which emphasizes the researcher's immersion in the phenomenon of interest (West, 2001). The methodology and epistemology supporting the heuristic inquiry method are rather difficult to glean. However, like empirical phenomenology from which it was derived, its goal is to formulate essences of experience. To this extent, heuristic inquiry has expressed the modern quest for certainty. However, it is a nonpositivist modernism, especially in terms of its emphasis on the researcher's subjectivity as the main instrument of the method, as reflected in some of West's writings. The same sentiments are evident in the work by Etherington (2000, 2001), who has described its method as a mix of narrative analysis and Moustakas's (1990) heuristic inquiry approach. Meanwhile, Etherington has drawn on social constructionism. Thus, although the focus of their work has been different (see later discussion), West and Etherington have come to walk on the same path to some extent.

Overall, although there have been exceptions, the British qualitative counseling and psychotherapy research indeed has instantiated the bricolage called for by McLeod, a leader of qualitative research methodology in that region. A postmodern, antipositivist undercurrent has carried this development along. Although there have been exceptions, in many ways this development is very different from what has gone on in the United States and Canada.

Work in the United States and Canada

The main work in the United States and Canada has entailed concern about method, in turn prompted by methodologies that have been inclined toward positivism. By the same token, the positivism has been softened to some extent by subscription to nonmetaphysical/internal (Putnam; see Conant, 1990) or moderate/ critical (Coffey, 1917/1958) realism, although this subscription has often been rather tacit. This position contrasts with the more frank relativist epistemology underpinning much discourse analysis. Thus, in casting about for a qualitative research method to study the client's experience of therapy, my group chose the grounded theory method (Rennie, Phillips, & Quartaro, 1988) criticized by Reason and Rowan (1981) for retaining the positivist subject–object duality. Moreover, in adapting the method to suit our purposes, we developed a way of categorizing text (the main grounded theory activity) that is more procedural than Glaser and Strauss made it. In their adaptation of the grounded theory method, Elliott et al. have made it even more objectivistic by insisting that categorization be conditional to research group consensus (Elliott et al., 1994), a tactic that became systematized by Hill, Thompson, and Williams (1997) under the rubric of consensual qualitative research. Meanwhile, comprehensive process analysis developed by Elliott (1984, 1989) has combined both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Elsewhere, in her application of phenomenology, Bachelor (1995) reserved the term *empirical* for confirmatory studies that could follow her investigation, even though she drew on Giorgi's (1985) procedures, which were explicitly characterized as empirical phenomenology. Moreover, Bachelor conceptualized categories rather than the structures called for by that method and made them conditional on the consensus of four judges, against Giorgi's defense of the appropriateness of an analyst working alone (e.g., Giorgi, 1994). (Bachelor was aware of the deviation, calling her method a form of content analysis.) In their demonstration of the assimilation model of therapy, Stiles et al. triangulated with their discourse analyses a rating scale of the assimilation process with their use of passages of therapy, in which indexes of interjudge agreement played a role (e.g., Stiles et al., 1990; Stiles, Meshot, Anderson, & Sloan, 1992).

These departures into qualitative research, emanating as they have from a background in positivism, have given rise to soul searching about methodology and an emerging relationship with positivism that has ranged from rejection to ambivalence, depending on the particular methodologist. In a seminal article, Stiles (1993) analyzed how qualitative research is about the interpretation of narrative material, in which the notions of reliability and validity carry very different meanings than they do in conventional, positivist research. Despite his positivist concessions, Elliott has characterized his comprehensive process analysis as being consistent with phenomenology and hermeneutics (Elliott & Shapiro, 1992) and developed a qualitative method to assess therapy outcome described as a hermeneutic case study method (Elliott, 2002). This method retains as first choice his preference for group consensus. However, Elliott also has suggested that an individual could weigh the pros and cons of whether or not a case was a success through a disciplined dialectic analysis. Moreover, he has given greater credence to the contextual relativism underpinning such interpretive inquiry than in previous writings and has come close to casting the exercise within the framework of rhetoric. Meanwhile, although perhaps the most positivist of the more prominent qualitative therapy researchers, Hill, Williams, and Thompson (1997) nevertheless distinguished their methodology

from the more standard kind of positivism reflected in a commentator's contrast of consensual qualitative research with his own avowed qualitative research method (Tinsley, 1997). They maintained that quantitative indexes of consensus are inappropriate, that any formulation coming out of the method is open to change, and that a reflexive stance is called for. Meanwhile, my thoughts about an epistemology and methodology that would account for the implicit assumptions underlying the grounded theory method have led me increasingly away from positivism (cf. Rennie, 2000b; Rennie et al., 1988).

Returns from the Methods

This review of the qualitative therapy research conducted in the United Kingdom and in Canada and the United States is not meant to be exhaustive. Instead, it is designed to illustrate the main activities that have been performed in the two regions, especially when differences in epistemology and methodology are apparent. It is also avoids going over ground already covered in previous reviews (McLeod, 2001; Rennie, 2002; see also Frommer & Rennie, 2001, which contains some illustrations of application) and anticipated in a forthcoming one (Elliott & Rennie, in press). Thus, to avoid redundancy, some studies that are not addressed in the following sections on research application are included in Table 2, especially.

Understandings From the United Kingdom

Like the American and Canadian work, most of the qualitative counseling and psychotherapy research conducted in the United Kingdom has been about aspects of the therapy process and the psychotherapeutic relationship. As well, the research can be divided into verbal report and therapy discursive studies. However, within these consistent frameworks, in the United Kingdom there have been research inquiries into spirituality and counseling practice that, although not a major movement, nevertheless are distinctive even when compared with the American literature on transpersonal psychology. These studies are part of the verbal report studies coming from this region.

Verbal report studies. Among the topics addressed by British investigators through regular interviewing (i.e., as opposed to IPR interviewing) have been spiritual counseling (West, see later discussion), spiritual aspects of psychoperistalsis, or "rumblings in the gut" (Sussman, 2001), and spiritual emergency (Ankrah, 2002). There have been studies of clients' views of family therapy (Howe, 1989, 1996), the views of practice by counselors classified into thinking-intuitive-feeling types according to the Myer-Briggs Type Indicator (Churchill & Bayne, 2001), and a study of psychotherapy for lesbians (Ryden & Loewenthal, 2001). There have also been investigations of counselors' experiences of physically touching clients (Tune, 2001), counselors' experiences of treating suicidal clients (Reeves & Mintz, 2001), the treatment of male victims of childhood sexual abuse (Etherington, 2000, 2001), and therapists' and clients' experiences of the use of transitional objects in therapy (Arthern & Madill, 1999, 2002). Among these various inquiries, I summarize those by West, Howe, Etherington, and Arthern and Madill for illustration.

West began his investigation of spirituality in counseling by conducting a survey to locate 30 counselors who practiced spiritual counseling, 7 of whom volunteered

to participate in a human inquiry group (West, 1996; cf. Reason & Heron, 1986; Reason & Rowan, 1981). These participants coconstructed, with West, their experiences of spirituality and healing. A grounded theory analysis of the reports resulted in a detailed structure of experience. This structure was organized in terms of four main categories: becoming a therapist/healer, what happened in healing as distinct from therapy, how the practitioner understood healing and the importance that was attributed to it, and dilemmas involved in this approach to practice (West, 1997, 1998, 2000).

In terms of studies of more traditional therapy, in an early study by Howe (1989; see also Howe, 1996), the members of 22 families who had participated in family therapy in one setting were interviewed about what it had been like for them. He characterized participants as nontakers, early leavers, ambivalent, or relaxed and satisfied and described their various views. Thus, for example, the early leavers reported having been made anxious by the machines (e.g., tape recorders), the method (e.g., bug-in-the-ear techniques), and the therapists' manner (depersonalizing). Each of these categories gathered properties representing related concerns. Overall, the study presents a sobering picture. Although only one setting was involved, the approach used in it is fairly common, and so the study has implications for many settings elsewhere.

Etherington (2000) gave a gripping account of therapy with two brothers, both of whom had been abused sexually by their grandfather as children. Neither brother had known that the other had been similarly victimized until the time of the therapy in adulthood. The frank disclosures that they allowed Etherington to put into her book, combined with her own candor, make it required reading for anyone performing therapy with men who were abused sexually in childhood. It is an excellent demonstration of how intensive, reflexive qualitative research involving case studies can have a lasting effect on a reader. It also raises the question of whether or not it is necessary to have the freedom and space provided by the book form of publication in order to produce this effect.

Arthern and Madill (1999) obtained and studied three psychodynamic–interpersonal and three gestalt therapists' reports on their use of a transitional object (TO; Winnicott, 1971) as an aid to therapy. They found that both groups of therapists judiciously gave material objects to some clients as a way of helping them to maintain a sense of connection while away from therapy. Generally, this was done with clients who had difficulty in this regard, such as those diagnosed with borderline personality disorders. Their analysis led to the understanding that the TO concretized the therapy relationship in a process of embodiment. This core process in turn was understood to have operated at four levels for the therapists: physical (the nature of the TO), process (how the TO emerged and how it was used), contextual (characteristics of the client and therapy relationship), and conceptual (theoretical rationale). Each of these levels was further broken down into constituents and illustrated. A subsequent article gives the client's view of the use of TOs (Arthern & Madill, 2002). The researchers interpreted the client's experience to have entailed two intertwined processes. The first involved a sense of continuity of therapy, connectedness with the therapist, and the development of a new sense of self. Within each of these processes, the TOs were seen to involve five processes pertaining to the client and therapist holding a sense of each other between therapy sessions: client cannot hold; therapist holds; TO holds; client holds TO; and client holds without TO.

It is noteworthy that the method used by Arthern and Madill departed from the more usual discourse analytic approach used by Madill. Nor is there much evidence

of the postmodern epistemology supporting the latter approach in the studies with Arthern. The same may be said of McLeod's work in that lately he has been endorsing students' use of the grounded theory method despite his interest in developing a narrative analytic method (John McLeod, personal communication, May 8, 2003). It is important to make this point. Some investigative teams have used alternative methods tacitly supported by alternative epistemologies and methodologies depending on the project. Thus, differences between the work in the United Kingdom and in the United States and Canada, although present sufficiently to merit attention, are certainly not clear-cut.

Interpersonal process recall studies.   In terms of the use of IPR, Grafanaki and McLeod (1999) obtained reports by both clients and their therapists of their recalled experiences of a total of 18 helpful and 17 hindering events in six experiential psychotherapy dyads. These events were selected through use of the Helpful Aspects of Therapy Questionnaire (Llewellyn et al., 1988). Cast in a narrative analytic framework, this material was organized into three main categories: therapist as audience, negotiation of a new story line, and coconstructing the story of therapy. In terms of the therapist as audience, for clients helpfulness depended on the extent to which they felt understood and accepted, whereas for therapists unhelpfulness was defined as moments when they were distracted. Regarding the negotiation of a new story line, new stories were helpful when they were experienced as empowering and emancipating and as unhelpful when threatening, painful, or untimely. As for coconstructing the story of therapy, the researchers observed that, in the therapy sessions as a whole, stories were told and jointly made sense of by the client and therapist. In their reports on the particular events focused on in the study, however, the clients appeared to be attempting to construct a story about the therapy that could be told to the external world. This study was followed by a second report on clients' and therapists' experiences of congruence and incongruence in which, interestingly, congruence was found to be not necessarily associated with helpful therapeutic events and incongruence was not necessarily involved in hindering ones (Grafanaki & McLeod, 2002).

Discursive studies.   Studies in Britain of therapy discourse conducted within a postmodern perspective have been applied to published literature on lesbians' experiences of therapy (Ryden & Lowenthal (2001). They have been directed to extensive literature, case notes, and personal reflections on the therapeutic relationship (Clarkson, 1995, 1996). They have involved the interpretation of narrative themes spread through a single course of therapy (McLeod & Balamoutsou, 1996, 2001). They have also pertained to interpreted power dynamics evident in a single event in the discourse between a male therapist and female client (Madill & Doherty, 1994) and in the initial session of a single case (McLeod & Lynch, 2000). These studies are similar in two respects: They have been conducted mainly within a relativist epistemological framework, and they have tended to focus on single cases, although the studies by Clarkson are mixed in this respect.

The study by Madill and Doherty (1994) focused on a particular moment in the conversation between a woman and her male therapist. The context of this event was the client's struggle to decide to stand up to her husband. The therapist's engagement in this struggle led the researchers to appraise the therapist as representing culturally embedded masculine values favoring independence and assertiveness. They demonstrate that this appraisal did not square well with the client's

values, causing a disjunction in that moment. A similar dynamic was interpreted to have occurred in another dyad study by McLeod and Lynch (2000), who applied Taylor's (1989) notion of strong evaluation to a woman's and her male therapist's respective notions of the "good life." An intensive discursive analysis of the transcript of the first session was followed by a more cursory analysis of the remaining 11 sessions. The whole analysis led to an understanding of how the cultural, masculine valuing of independence and self-assertion, evident in the therapist's discourse, interfered with his ability to understand the client's valuing of duty and responsibility in caring for her mother.

Understandings From the United States and Canada

Verbal report studies. Studies of written verbal reports on counseling and psychotherapy not addressed in the previous reviews and anticipated in the forth-coming one (see prior discussion) have focused on a number of topics. Investigations have been directed to clients' experiences of success in therapy (Frontman & Kunkel, 1994), change in therapy (Cummings, Hallberg, & Slemon, 1994), a good therapy relationship (Bachelor, 1995), helpful therapist self-disclosure (Knox, Hess, Petersen, & Hill, 1997), and clients' internal representations of their therapists (Knox, Goldberg, Woodhouse, & Hill, 1999). Therapists' perspectives have also been sought in terms of countertransference (Hayes, McCracken, McClanahan, & Hill, 1998), transference (Gelso, Hill, Mohr, Rochlen, & Zach, 1999), and values about therapy (Walsh, 1995, 1996; Walsh, Perrucci, & Severns, 1999; see Table 2). Among these studies, selected to add to previous reviews, the methods used were grounded theory (Frontman & Kunkel), narrative analysis (Cummings et al.), content analysis (Bachelor), and hermeneutic analysis (Walsh); the remainder involved consensual qualitative research. To illustrate the nature of the results from qualitative research studies of verbal reports on therapeutic experiences of various types, I focus on the study by Cummings et al. (1994) as an example of narrative analysis and on the study by Hayes et al. (1998) illustrating consensual qualitative research.

In an application of narrative analysis derived from Bruner's (1986) notions of narrative and Polkinghorne's (1991) suggestions for performing qualitative research, Cummings et al. (1994) studied change in therapy as experienced by 10 female undergraduates who volunteered for a nine-session course of counseling. Written answers were obtained in response to five questions. Three of these were directed to each session, asking (a) for the most important thing that had happened in it, (b) why it was important and how it was either helpful or unhelpful, and (c) for recollections of the thoughts and feelings experienced during that time in the session. The remaining two questions inquired about thoughts and activities engaged in after and related to a preceding session and experiences of change resulting from the counseling. The answers were summarized as narratives by two of the researchers, which were then audited by two judges. The analysis led to the interpretation of three patterns of change: consistent, interrupted, and, in the case of one client, minimal. Several features of each pattern are given and relate to increasing awareness, processing insights between sessions, resolving to change, rapidly forming a therapeutic relationship, and developing schemas for how change occurs in counseling.

Hayes et al. (1998) interviewed 8 therapists immediately after 127 sessions with 8 clients about the therapists' perspectives on countertransference. The interviews were structured in advance of the study in terms of five factors: origins, triggers,

manifestations, effects, and management factors. Thus, the discovery aspect of the study was limited to the categories of experience that emerged within each of these a priori domains. Nevertheless, the returns were considerable in scope, constituted by up to 7 categories and 18 subcategories in the case of the triggers domain. Few of the categories and subcategories were judged to typify all therapists, an indication of the complexity involved in this aspect of the therapist's experience. Illustrative case summaries add to the value of this report on this sensitive topic.

IPR studies. Rasmussen and Angus (1996, 1997) reported on a study of four dyads made up of two therapists, each seeing a borderline and a nonborderline client. IPR inquiries were made of both clients' and therapists' experience in a single session for each dyad. In the first report, attention was paid to how the members of the dyads used metaphor in the sessions. Two main understandings emerged from this focus. First, the metaphors illuminated the clients' issues and aspects of the clients' self and object relations and were useful for the therapists in their attempts to deepen clients' experiential engagement in the session. Second, clients diagnosed as having borderline personalities used metaphor in what the researchers referred to as a literal mode, whereas nonborderline clients did so in a representational mode. In the literal mode, clients seemed more intent on ventilating and distancing themselves from the content than on reflecting on it (Rasmussen & Angus, 1996). In a subsequent report, these two modes of interaction were assessed in terms of the borderline and nonborderline clients' discourse in general (i.e., beyond metaphor; Rasmussen & Angus, 1997).

IPR has been used to study clients' experiences of pauses in therapy conversation. In an investigation of reports by 7 clients, Levitt (2001) was led to understand that their covert experiences and activities were neutral, facilitative, or obstructive. As elaborated in subsequent articles, obstructive-activity pauses were understood to have involved either disengagement or interaction. In the former, the clients had emotionally disengaged from the topic either to avoid pain or to create distance from the therapeutic process. In the latter, the pauses were moments when clients' attention had shifted away from the therapeutic process to either the therapist or the interaction with him or her. This shift was explained as having been caused either by the demands of the communication in that moment, safeguarding of the alliance with the therapist, or confusion about the therapist's comments or tasks (Levitt, 2002a). In contrast, facilitating pauses were of three types: emotional (moving into a powerful flood of feeling), expressive (looking for the right words), and reflective (questioning ideas, contemplating complexity, making connections/insights; Levitt, 2002b). Thus, Levitt's research has added to previous IPR work (see McLeod, 2001; Rennie, 2002) in delineating the kinds of activities clients have engaged in silently during therapy conversation.

Discursive studies. McMullen (1989) performed an intensive, descriptive discursive analytic study of 95 therapy audiotapes of a successful and an unsuccessful case of each of 3 therapists participating in the Vanderbilt 1 psychotherapy research project (Strupp & Hadley, 1979). She focused on the use of metaphor by both members of the dyads, specifically whether this use distinguished the successful from the unsuccessful cases. In this large study, judges were used to locate the metaphors, which then were winnowed to 837 client-produced and 315 therapist-produced metaphors. Repeated attention to the audio recordings led to the understanding that the successful clients had used metaphors as

centralizing themes and often had produced bursts of metaphoric variations of the metaphor serving as theme. In contrast, the metaphors used by the unsuccessful clients had been much less thematic, and these clients had seldom used metaphors in bursts.

Discourse analysis has also been used by Stiles et al. in the interest of demonstrating the tenability of their generic model of therapy having to do with gradual assimilation of warded-off, deeply troubling experience (e.g., Stiles et al., 1990, 1992; Stiles & Angus, 2001). They have proposed a seven-stage model of this assimilation process, ranging from the lack of assimilation of the experience of conscious schemata to a full assimilation and associated resolution of the emotional pain involved in the experience. In this approach, transcripts of therapy sessions have been analyzed intensively in terms of the evidence it has provided of the various stages in the model. The analysis has drawn in part on the application of a scale depicting the stages. However, it has also depended on analysis of the meaning of the client's text, especially in terms of the model.

Discussion

As indicated, the work in the United Kingdom in some respects has been more responsive to postmodern skepticism about the utility of method than has research in North America. In part, this development appears to have been influenced by the impact of a small but vigorous group of British critical social psychologists engaged in deconstructive discourse analysis (see, e.g., various contributions to the edited work by Ibanez & Iniguez, 1997). It has also been influenced by differences in the two regions in the training and organization of counselors. In the United Kingdom, there is a large association of counselors, the majority of whom do not have a background in psychology (McLeod, 2001). For these counselors, qualitative research has increased the possibility of integrating research into practice. The interdisciplinary perspective offered by postmodernism has been attractive. This situation has contrasted with the one in the United States and Canada, where most qualitative counseling and psychotherapy researchers have had backgrounds in either clinical or counseling psychology and, consequently, have been steeped in and surrounded by positivism. British qualitative counseling and therapy research thus has contributed to the debate on the virtues of relativism versus realism. Whether or not the interests of qualitative counseling and therapy research would best be served by polarizing these two epistemological positions, and the positions on methodology and method associated with them, is an open question. My preference is for the field as a whole to assume a position between realism and relativism and to be explicit about it. Coherent with this position would be a steering of a methodical course between what Kvale (2001, p. 10) referred to as the perils of "a no-method Charybdis and an all-method Scylla."

In any case, qualitative research provides new ways of understanding conversations, whether in the form of therapy dialogue or commentaries by those who produce it. Qualitative research has heightened appreciation of clients' agency and has helped to unpack the power dynamics involved in the therapy relationship. It has done much to bring attention to the role of context in experience and conduct and has provided access to and ways of understanding private experiences not expressed to each other by either member of the therapy dyad. In addition, its

users have taken steps toward including the researcher's own subjectivity involved in attempts to understand the subjectivity of others. Qualitative research has not produced nor, perhaps, is intended to produce grand theories. Its products have been more specific in nature and localized to particular contexts. Moreover, seldom has qualitative research been programmatic (Fischer, Eckenrod, Embree, & Jarzynka, 2001; McLeod, 2001). However, in many ways, that is precisely the point: Programmatic research responsive to unifying theory is a rational endeavor first and foremost, supported by empiricism. Such research is intellectually satisfying in that it gives coherence to the world, but whether or not that coherence is sound ontologically may be another matter.

In conclusion, qualitative research has offered an alternative way of studying counseling and psychotherapy. The challenges it has taken on have been immense, and the issues it has raised have been and continue to be contentious, even for insiders (cf. Elliott, Fischer, & Rennie, 1999, 2000; Reicher, 2000; Miles & Huberman, 1984; Smith & Heshusius, 1986) let alone outsiders. Differing views on epistemology especially cut deep and are hard to resolve because they rest on belief as much as evidence. It is the reflexive nature of human experience and conduct that make them so difficult to address scientifically and propels inquirers into dogmas of various sorts to quell uncertainty. Qualitative researchers have been bolder in taking on this uncertainty than have practitioners of what became over the last century the standard, positivist approach to inquiry. In doing so they have expanded the range of possibility within the complex field of counseling and psychotherapy.

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Zusammenfassung

Es wird die qualitative Forschung in den Bereichen psychologische Beratung und Psychotherapie, die Großbritannien, Kanada und die USA hervorgebracht hat, untersucht. Es wird aufgezeigt, dass Methoden und Methodologie in der britischen Forschung mehr durch die Epistemologie der Postmoderne beeinflußt sind als die nordamerikanische, die einen größeren Positivismuseinfluß widerspiegelt. Dementsprechend wird in Nordamerika auch ein größeres Gewicht auf die Methode gelegt. Die Unterschiede werden dahingehend diskutiert, wie das Umfeld der psychologischen Beratung sich in Großbritannien im Vergleich zu den USA und Kanada entwickelt hat. Auch diskutiert werden die Spannungsfelder, die zwischen Realismus und Relativismus bestehen, und eine entsprechend positive Gewichtung von Methode bzw. Skeptizismus bewirken. Der Artikel schließt mit Gedanken über die Implikationen von qualitativer Forschung für das Gebiet der psychologischen Beratung und Psychotherapie als ganzem.

Résumé

L'auteur examine la consultation qualitative et la recherche en psychothérapie réalisée en Grande Bretagne, au Canada et aux Etats-Unis. Il montre que les méthodes et méthodologies impliquées dans la recherche britannique ont été plus influencées par l'épistémologie postmoderne qu'en Amérique du Nord, ce qui reflète un plus grand impact du positivisme. On met en évidence, par conséquent, une valorisation plus grande sur la méthode dans cette dernière région comparée avec la précédente. Les différences sont discutées en fonction de la manière de laquelle le champ de la consultation s'est développé en Grande Bretagne, en comparaison avec les Etats-Unis et le Canada. De même, l'auteur discute les tensions entre réalisme et relativisme et, par conséquent, entre la mise en valeur positive de la méthode et le scepticisme. L'article conclut avec des pensées au sujet des implications de la recherche qualitative pour le champ de la consultation et de la psychothérapie dans son ensemble.

Resumen

En este artículo se examinan el *counseling* cualitativo y la investigación en psicoterapia realizados en el Reino Unido, en Canadá y en los Estados Unidos. Se muestra que la epistemología posmoderna ha influido más en los métodos y metodologías utilizadas en la investigación británica que en el trabajo norteamericano. Este último refleja una mayor influencia del positivismo. En forma correspondiente, se

muestra que entre los norteamericanos se ha dado un valor más alto al método que entre los británicos. Las diferencias se examinan en términos del modo en el que el campo del *counseling* se ha desarrollado en el Reino Unido comparado con los Estados Unidos y Canadá. También se discuten las tensiones entre el realismo y el relativismo y, en forma correspondiente, entre una valoración positiva del método y el escepticismo. El artículo concluye con ideas acerca de las implicaciones de la investigación cualitativa en el campo del *counseling* y la psicoterapia como un todo.

Resumo

O artigo examina a investigação qualitativa em psicoterapia e aconselhamento produzida no Reino Unido, no Canada e nos Estados Unidos. Mostra-se que os métodos e metodologias utilizadas na investigação Britânica têm sido mais influenciados pela epistemologia pós-moderna do que os estudos Norte Americanos, os quais reflectem um maior efeito do positivismo. Analogamente, verifica-se que se tem colocado um valor mais elevado no método nesta região em comparação com a anterior. As diferenças são discutidas em termos do modo como o aconselhamento se desenvolveu no Reino Unido em comparação com os Estados Unidos e Canadá. Também são discutidos as tensões entre o realismo e o relativismo e, correspondentemente, entre valoração positiva do método e o cepticismo. Este artigo conclui com considerações acerca das implicações da investigação qualitativa para o campo do aconselhamento e da psicoterapia como um todo.

Sommario

E' qui esaminata la ricerca qualitativa nell'area della psicoterapia e del counseling prodotta nel Regno Unito, Canada e USA. Viene mostrato come I metodi impiegati nelle ricerche britanniche siano maggiormente influenzati dall'epistemologia post moderna più che I lavori prodotti nel Nord America, I quali appaiono più influenzati dal positivismo.In sintonia con quanto appena detto i paesi del Nord America sembrano dare maggiore valore al metodo rispetto alle ricerche del UK. Le differenza emerse vengono discusse in termini di differente sviluppo del counseling nei diversi paesi a confronto. Inoltre vengono discusse le tensioni tra realismo e relativismo, tra positivistica fiducia nella metodologia e lo scetticismo.L'articolo si conclude con alcune considerazioni circa le implicazioni della ricerca qualitativa nel campo della ricerca in psicoterapia.

摘要

本篇檢視英國與加拿大、美國的諮商與心理治療質性研究，發現與北美的實證主義傾向相比，英國承襲的研究方法更受後現代認識論影響，同時北美地區對方法論的重視甚於英國。本文就英國與美國、加拿大諮商發展的情況討論其中差異，並論述實在論與相對主義間，和實證方法價值與懷疑論間的張力，以質化研究在諮商與心理治療領域的應用做結論。