

Process mapping

Representing multiple change experiences
in counselling and psychotherapy

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Aims

To introduce – and illustrate –
an evolving method for
articulating the *multiple*
change processes that may
take place in psychotherapy
and counselling

1.
One change
process or
many?

Therapeutic schools tend to
assume just one – or a small
number of – core change
processes in therapy

CBT

Psychological distress is caused by dysfunctional thinking, and ameliorated by its correction

Person-Centred

Psychological distress is caused by conditions of worth, and ameliorated by unconditional positive regard

Logotherapy

Psychological distress is caused by a loss of meaning in life, and ameliorated by its discovery

Quantitative psychotherapy research

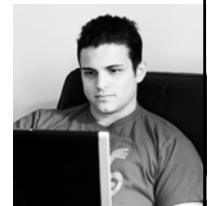
- Tends to focus on effectiveness of singular therapeutic practices or techniques
- Tends to *assume* change processes rather than exploring them: 'black box' approach
- Heterogeneity = 'error'

Dodo bird hypothesis

- But research findings in counselling and psychotherapy field consistently find that clients can be helped in multiple ways
- Suggests that there may be multiple pathways of change
- Consistent with qualitative data...

Ashok: Helpful aspects of therapy

- Just talking (person-centred [PCA])
- Focusing on practical solutions to problems (problem-focused)
- Looking at each relationship with a man in the past and seeing what attracted me to them (relational)
- Realising that I am loved (PCA)
- Deciding to look forward and turn a corner (Existential)
- Reading a letter from my father and getting the therapist's take on it (Technique)
- Just being allowed to go off tangent (PCA)

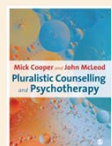


Even within the same session, different activities can be very helpful

Tanya.... (session 11, post-session form, recent crisis)

- Please write down something that you did in this session that felt particularly helpful to you:
 - *"I let myself get in touch with how I really felt about all this, I hadn't up to now because I just felt disengaged."*
- Please write down a second thing (if there is one) that you did in this session that felt particularly helpful to you:
 - *"Objective/logical thinking about the situation."*

Therapy is not one thing



Experientially-based, bottom-up psychotherapy research – *contra theory-down* hypothetic-deductive research -- needs to stay open to the possibility of multiple change processes: across and within clients

2. How can we articulate multiple change processes in therapy?

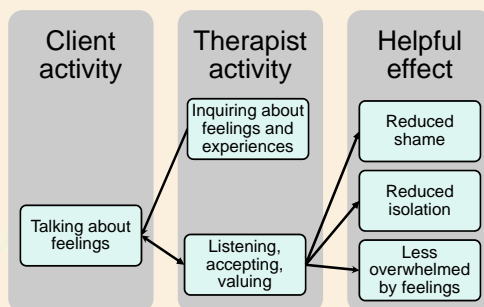
In-depth qualitative research

- Capacity to identify, and articulate, change processes in all their richness and complexity – does not necessitate reduction down to singular, averaged processes
- But how can we analyse and present qualitative data in way that articulates multiplicity of processes?

'Causal networks' (Miles and Huberman, 1994)

'A *causal network* is a display of the most important independent variables in a field study (shown in boxes) and of the relationships among them (shown by arrows). The plot of these relationships is *directional*, rather than solely correlational. It is assumed that some factors exert an influence on others: X brings Y into being or makes Y larger or smaller. A causal network, to be useful, must have associated analytic text describing the meaning of the connections among factors.' (p. 153)

Example causal network



Evolving method

- In-depth qualitative interviews (e.g., Kvale, 1996, *InterViews*): dialogical, unstructured, focused
- 'What was helpful in therapy?'
– *Helpful effects*
- 'How did that come about?'
– *Client activity* – 'What did you do...?'
– *Therapist activity* – 'What did your therapist do?'
- Exploring links and processes

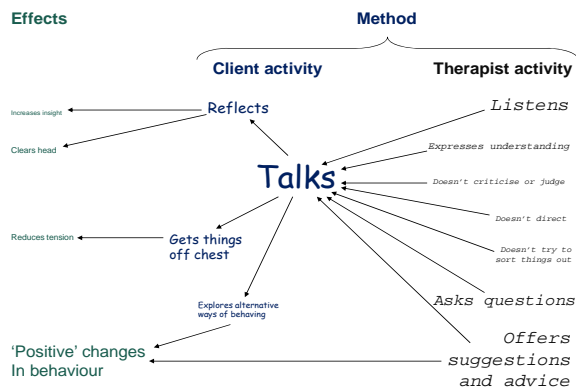
Analysis

- Establishing domains
- Thematic analysis of responses in each domain >> categories
- Articulating/graphic representation of links and processes across categories
- Graphic representation of prevalence of response

3.

Examples

Change processes in school-based counselling

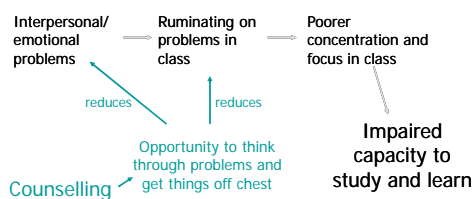


Heterogeneity of helpful counsellor activities

LISTENING "Usually, when teenagers talk to, like, adults, they usually jump in mid-sentence and say, 'No, this is happening' or not doing what you want, but [name of counsellor] actually listened to what I had to say and then waited until I was finished to speak."

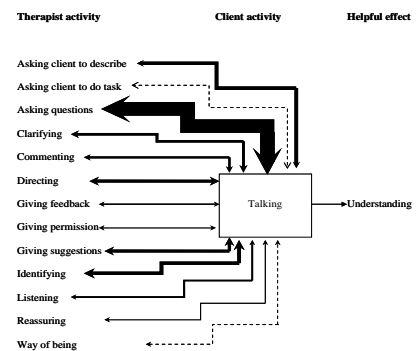
OFFERS ADVICE "She just, sort of, looked at it from her point of view and sort of, tried to help me along in everything, 'cause I've gone through quite a bit recently, with deaths in the family and big family break-up, so she just, sort of, waited until I said what I had to say and looked at it from her point of view and said what she would do and gave me options on what to do about it."

Impact of school-based counselling on students' capacities to study and learn (Nathalie Ogden, 2006)



The client's perspective (Watson et al., 2012)

Figure 1. Process map of therapist activities that led to the client activity of talking and subsequently to enhanced understanding



4. Implications for practice

Implications for practice

- Process maps can identify, and articulate, range of helpful therapeutic activities:
 - Across client groups
 - Across different practices
- Do not establish what *is* helpful, but activities that have the *potential* to be of help – for a greater or lesser proportion of clients – and can be drawn on in practice

5. Challenges/ limitations

Challenges/Limitations

- Reliant on respondents' conscious recall
- Findings dependent on practices
- Not everyone thinks 'visually'
- Complexity of trying to depict multiple processes
- Loss of complexity of data: e.g., not all change is linear
- Of more value to therapists aligned with pluralistic/integrative outlook

6. Conclusion

Conclusion

- To 'return' to clients' experiences of therapy, useful to develop methods that are open to multiple change processes...
- And which can inform the work of psychotherapists and counsellors
- Process mapping is one attempt to develop ways of doing psychotherapy research that may facilitate this