

Deconstruction and the ethical relation in therapy

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Certificate of Authorship/Originality

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree, nor has it been submitted as part of requirements of any other degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

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Abstract

This thesis explores the ethical relation in therapy in two parallel but connected themes or movements. The first deconstructs an epistemological breach between modern and postmodern paradigms in therapy that has divided practitioners over two decades. This sets modern, scientific or evidence-based knowledge against a postmodern therapy based on narrative, dialogic and relational forms of knowing. Drawing on the philosophy of Derrida and Levinas the thesis proposes the ethical relation as a third path or way of bringing the polarized theoretical positions of the modern/postmodern into dialogue with each other.

I call this ethical positioning towards modern and postmodern knowledge and theory *paramodern*, which means both beside *and* beyond at the same time. It moves the focus from fruitless debates about epistemology or whether knowledge is modern *or* postmodern, scientific or relational etc. to the issue of how it is *applied* in the ethical relation. Such a stance allows therapy practitioners to access a broad range of knowledge, models and techniques. It defines an ethical and integrative approach to therapy that is at once scientific, evidence-informed, practice-based *and* richly grounded in relational, dialogic and narrative perspectives. In the thesis this integrative ethical model is applied to various clinical issues like adolescent depression.

The second theme of the thesis draws on Levinas and Derrida's commentary on his ethical philosophy to ground the self, therapy and the therapeutic relationship in the ethical relation. It argues the ethical is central to the framing of therapy whatever the theory or approach. Both these themes are connected in the overall argument that to deconstruct *is* to be ethical and vice-versa.

The thesis draws on my experience as a practitioner, teacher and author in the field of family therapy over more than two decades. While a theoretical enquiry it is illustrated throughout by constructed examples of therapy practice. The main body of the thesis consists of eight chapters written for publication (chapters 2-9), six as articles in peer-reviewed family therapy/ psychology journals and two as book chapters. All of these have been published except for chapter 2 which is in the process of submission and chapter 3 which has been accepted for publication. Within this framework the introductory Chapter 1 provides a detailed synopsis of the author's previous publications with a commentary on their links to the thesis and describes how the thesis is presented and structured. The final chapter 10 summarizes and reflects on what the thesis has achieved.