

~1995

**Paradigmatic  
Transformations  
in Society  
and History:**

**RETHINKING  
COUNSELLING  
AND  
THERAPY**



# PARADIGMATIC TRANSFORMATIONS IN SOCIETY: REASONS FOR RETHINKING COUNSELLING AND THERAPY

	<i>Pre Modern</i>	<i>Modern</i>	<i>Postmodern: "The as-yet unnameable which begins to proclaim itself" – Derrida</i>		<i>Reference Documents</i>
Sources of authority, legitimated knowledge	The sacred; church/state theocracy, divinely sanctioned consensus.	Secular humanism; individual <i>reason</i> = scientific methods and liberal democracy. State ideological apparatuses (schools and science, especially) as central dispensers of codified and legitimated knowledge.	<i>Postmodern Affirmative</i> Participatory, dialogic and pluralistic structures of authority. Non-dualistic, anti-hierarchical. Uprising of ex-centrics. Multiple sites from which the World is 'spoken'. Feminist theory as the quantum physics of postmodernism.	<i>Postmodern Reactive</i> Collapse of traditional sources of meaning, nihilism, schizo-cynicism, cultural whirl pool of Baudrillardian simulcra. Apocalyptic speculation.	<p><b>Relevant analytic texts: society and transformations</b></p> <p>Beck, U. (1992). <i>Risk Society</i> (trans. M. Ritter). Newbury Park: Sage Publications.</p> <p>Beck, U. (1991). <i>Ecological Enlightenment</i>. (Trans. M. Ritter). New Jersey: Humanities Press.</p> <p>Giddens, A. (1993). <i>New Rules of Sociological Method</i>. 2nd. ed. Stanford: Stanford University Press.</p> <p>Giddens, A. (1991). <i>Modernity and Self-Identity</i>. Stanford: Stanford University Press.</p> <p>Hage, J., &amp; Powers, C. (1992). <i>Post-Industrial Lives</i>. Newbury Park: Sage Publications.</p> <p>MacIntyre, A. (1984). <i>After Virtue</i> (2nd. ed). Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.</p> <p>Rorty, R. (1989). <i>Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity</i>. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.</p> <p>Rosenau, P. (1992). <i>Postmodernism and the Social Sciences</i>. Princeton: Princeton University Press.</p> <p><b>Texts critical of modern therapy and counselling</b></p> <p>Cushman, P. (1995). <i>Constructing the Self, Constructing America</i>. New York: Addison-Wesley.</p> <p>Fancher, R. (1995). <i>Cultures of Healing</i>. New York: Freeman.</p> <p>Hillman, J &amp; Ventrua, M. (1992). <i>We've Had A Hundred Years of Psychotherapy And The World's Getting Worse</i>. San Francisco: Harper.</p> <p>Masson, J. (1989) <i>Against Therapy</i>. London: Harper and Collins.</p> <p>Schaefer, A. (1992). <i>Beyond Therapy, Beyond Science</i>. San Francisco: Harper.</p> <p>Smail, D. (1993). <i>The Origins of Unhappiness</i>. London: Harper and Collins.</p> <p><b>New directions in postmodern therapy &amp; counselling</b></p> <p>Guidano, V. (1991). <i>The Self in Process</i>. New York: The Guilford Press.</p> <p>Hoyt, M. (1994). <i>Constructive Therapies</i>. New York: The Guilford Press.</p> <p>Mahoney, M. (1995). <i>Cognitive and Constructive Psychotherapies</i>. New York: Springer.</p> <p>McNamee, S., &amp; Gergen, K. (eds). <i>Therapy as Social Construction</i>. Newbury Park: Sage.</p> <p>Neimeyer, R. &amp; Mahoney, M. (1995) <i>Constructivism in Psychotherapy</i>. Wash., D.C.: APA Publ.</p> <p>Parry, A., &amp; Doan, R. (1994) <i>Story Re-Visions: Narrative Therapy in the Postmodern World</i>. New York: The Guilford Press.</p> <p>Smail, D. (1993). <i>The Origins of Unhappiness</i>. London: Haper and Collins.</p> <p>White, D. &amp; Epston, D. (1990). <i>Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends</i>. New York: Norton.</p> <p>Worell, J. &amp; P. Remer (1992). <i>Feminist Perspectives in Therapy</i>. New York: Wiley.</p> <p><b>New directions in postmodern career counselling</b></p> <p>Peavy, R.V. (1993). Constructivist Counselling: A Prospectus. <i>Guidance and Counselling</i>, 9. 3-12, 1993.</p> <p>Savicas, M. Career Counselling in the Postmodern Era. <i>Journal of Cognitive Psychotherapy: An International Quarterly</i>, 7, 205-15, 1993.</p> <p>Tiedeman-Miller, A. (1988). <i>Lifecareer: The Quantum Leap into a Process Theory of Career</i>. Vista, Calif.: Lifecareer Foundation.</p> <p>Vahämöttönen, T., Keskinen, P. Anita, &amp; Parrila, R. A conceptual approach for developing an activity-based approach to career counselling. <i>International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling</i>, 17, 19-34, 1994.</p>
Conception of the individual	Destined, ordained by God; animistic. Religious human or barbarian.	<i>Humanism:</i> Autonomous, individualism, self-directive, natural rights, shapeable, potentially fully conscious, refusal to accept limits. Producer. Rational. Perfectable. Capable of choice, experiences freedom and its lack:  <i>Positivist behavioral:</i> Conditioned. Rational, machine-like. Reduceable to parts. Blank at birth—programmable. Logical, caused entity shapeable by reward and punishment Choice and freedom irrelevant concepts.	<i>Post-humanism:</i> De-centred, distributed subject, culturally inscribed, constructed, contradictory, relational, life-world embedded. Cyborg: continuously recreated and recreating via technology.  <i>Postmodern Affirmative</i> Subject as process, capable of agency and ego integration with fluidity. Heightened symbolic and innovation capacity.	<i>Postmodern Reactive</i> Fractured, schizoid consumer. Scattered, uprooted, info-saturated, norm-less, anxious, uncertain, conflicted and doubtful.	
Conception of the self	Not conceptually identified.	Matrix of variables, confirmable by psychometrics. Determinate, measureable, develops through fixed linear stages.	<i>Postmodern Affirmative</i> Self is socially constructed; evolving, polyphonic; in-process; non-linear, dynamic.	<i>Postmodern Reactive</i> Perturbed, indeterminate, prone to chaos. Confused, lost, often drifting to margins.	
Material base	Feudal economy.	<i>Industrial age:</i> Navigation, gunpowder, printing press, the factory, various forms of state capitalism. Taylorism. The Rise of markets, consumers, and corporate culture. Bureaucratic rationalization, instrumental reason and technology, materialistic values gain ascendancy.	Post-industrial, information age. Nuclear power, micro-electronic global capitalism. Globalized markets. Increasing disparities in wealth. Super-multi-national corporations more powerful than some nation-states. Human labor diminishing in factories – replaced by robotics. Permanent unemployment. Large scale environmental contamination and destruction.		
View of history and the development of society and culture	Static, divinely ordered.	Belief in progress. Linear, progressive change = teleology. Ignorance → enlightenment → emancipation=inevitable trajectory. Doctrine of eventual secular salvation via research and scientific rationality. Science & religion as the grand narratives.	Non-linear, indeterminate, cyclical, discontinuous, contingent. Focus on the present, the past as a fiction of the present. Loss of faith in progress and deterioration of traditions as guides for social life and history. Breakdown of grand narrative history.		
Place of community, tradition, the social	Commitment to tradition, to what is fixed and enduring.	Change valorized. Dualism of individualism and cultural embeddedness. Individualism prized over sociality and community.	<i>Postmodern Affirmative</i> Moving beyond contradictions between individual and society. Difference without opposition. Personal autonomy and social relatedness. Eco-politics. Social constructionism. Pluralistic perspectives, collaborative social structures.	<i>Postmodern Reactive</i> Increased normalization and regulation. Multinational hyperspace. Increase of imprisoned populations and general surveillance of citizens. Money and business ethic valorized. Corporations move to control education and ensure inculcation of the values of a market economy, and a consumer mentality.	
Form and purpose of counselling & therapy	Folk wisdom and divine guidance precursors to modern professionalized counselling and therapy. Indigenous cultures incorporate 'healing' rituals and practices.	<i>Psychoanalytic:</i> Built on a medical, quasi-scientific model. Emphasis on biological drives, unconscious processes. Therapist valorized as all-knowing expert. Language of 'pathology' dominant. Patriarchal theorizing and profession. A prescriptive style of counselling and therapy.  <i>Positivist behavioral/cognitive behavioral</i> Quasi-scientific model, reductionistic and focussed on behavior, conditioning, and adaptation to social norms and standards. Rational, logical methods of therapy reflecting an 'industrial man' framework of assumptions, values, and justifications. Therapist construed as expert, scientific, and therapy largely de-contextualized, objective and linked directly to neurophysiology. A persuasive style of therapy.  <i>Humanistic:</i> Compassion and human perfectability valorized. Existential values emphasized. Language less on pathology and more on achieving utopian states of being and ways of living. De-linked from medical model of cure. Most forms of humanistic counselling deeply personal, individualistic and focussed on subjective, inner experience, and personal growth ideals. Widely disseminated in popular psychology. Some links with "New Age" philosophizing. A supportive, utopian style of therapy and counselling. Nearly all forms of western counselling and therapy conceptualize 'problems' as being located 'in the heads' of people not in the context and not as normal reactions to malign circumstances.	Postmodern understanding is transforming the nature of counselling and therapy. Therapy is moving toward moral discourse, meaning, self-organizing, activity, and away from objectivity, behavioral focus and claims for a scientific legitimation. The self is seen as less a psychometric entity—that is, linear set of variables, rational, and decontextualized—and more a reflexive project. The self is construed to be an evolving dynamical system which is relationally constructed rather than the product of a monadic individual. Concepts of voice, meaning and activity are rising to ascendancy over behavior.  <i>Postmodern affirmative therapy</i> Various forms of constructive counselling and therapy are developing. Example features: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal and social realities are socially constructed</li> <li>• Humans are self-organizing, non-linear &amp; dynamic systems</li> <li>• Humans use language to construct meaning and society</li> <li>• Agency and activity replacing concepts of cognizer and behavior</li> <li>• Relationality, connectedness, context, and 'public' space replace reliance on 'inner world'</li> <li>• Role of the counsellor as expert is de-emphasized—collaboration and cooperation between therapist and client replaces domination</li> <li>• Concept of therapy as contextual activity, includes issues of power/empowerment, advocacy, social policy, and emancipatory action</li> </ul>	<i>Postmodern reactive therapy</i> Early forms of deconstructive therapy include Gestalt therapy and primal scream therapy—however, these forms retain individualistic psychology. Example features of reactive therapy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• nihilistic, de-centred subject</li> <li>• infinite range of alternatives—the world is as we see it, radical relativism</li> <li>• individuals 'float' in hyperreal—Cyberspace as 'therapeutic medium'?</li> <li>• Surveillance therapy combining electronic surveillance devices with persuasive and coercive adaptation to 'normalcy'</li> <li>• Imprisonment replacing therapy &amp; redefining children as 'adults' in order to subject them to punishment previously restricted to adults</li> <li>• Media-mediated populist therapy as prime-time talk shows on topics previously restricted to therapy mixing real-life experiences, soap opera technique, and 'expert' opinion</li> <li>• Internet counselling and bulletin board therapy discussion groups</li> </ul>	

**Special acknowledgement to:**  
Patti Lather (1991) *Getting Smart: Feminist Research and Pedagogy with/in the Postmodern*. New York: Routledge.

# TRANSFORMATIVE IDEAS

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We are always more than what we know of ourselves. We are not what we are once and for all – we are a process, not merely an extant and static life. Within that process we are endowed with possibilities to make of ourselves what we will *through the activities on which we decide and carry out.*

R.V. Peavy, 1995 – Inspired by Karl Jaspers,  
*Man in the Modern Age*, 1931

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A man is always a teller of tales: he lives surrounded by his stories and the stories of others; he sees everything that happens to him through them, and he tries to live his life as if he were recounting it.

Jean-Paul Sartre, *Nausea*, 1938

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Every era has a particular configuration of self, illness, healer, technology; they are a kind of cultural package.

P. Cushman, 1995

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Whatever we call reality, it is revealed to us only through an active construction in which we participate.

I. Prigogine, 1984

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Feminist psychology is transpiring in a vibrant space ... even as we stand ready for difficulties, a new world is already in the making, a world where we have earnestly participated in the transformation of gender, knowledge and knowledge makers.

Jill Morawski, *Practicing Feminism, Reconstructing Psychology: Notes on a Liminal Science*, 1993

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## A SocioDynamic Counselling Perspective

- > Consultation on:
- > Research
- > Counselling practice
- > Counsellor education
- > Counselling supervision
- > Bi-cultural counselling
- > Innovations in counselling

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