



POSTMODERN THEORIES IN COUNSELLING

REVIEW

Diversity/Transcultural Perspectives & Making black therapeutic spaces

Week 2

Dominant periods in human history



- Designated the **"first era" - Premodern era**
Roughly sixth century BCE to the Renaissance period.
- Designated the **"second era" - Modern era**
Renaissance period to the 1950s-1960s.
- Designated the **third era" - Postmodern / constructivist era (fourth force is counselling theory)**
The present time.

- People who hold a postmodern view are often described as *social constructivists*.
- Constructivists believe in subjective realities.
- Reality does not exist independently of observational processes.
- Meanings are constructed reflecting a point of view.

Postmodernism and the path to social constructivism

- Personal construct psychology (Kelly, 1955) – helped lay the groundworks for social constructivism and aided the development of an integrative psychotherapeutic approach.
- George Kelly intended to embrace the person's experience of the world in its totality.
- Personal construct psychology positions the person as a scientist who repeatedly tests the robustness of their constructions.

Constructive alternativism

- Another key contribution of Kelly's personal construct theory is constructive alternativism. This proposes that there are always alternative ways of conceptualising events.
- When previous sets of constructions appear to be unsatisfactory, these constructions may be reconstructed entirely, thus developing new dimensions of meaning.



The self as constructed



- According to Kelly – the self is not discovered it is constructed. This is because knowledge is socially constructed.
- Core constructs- Self constructions which are deeply embedded or formed early in life may become resistant to modification or self-reflection.
- Once a definition of self is adopted it can be challenging to identify behaviours that oppose that definition.

Relativism



- The paradigm of social constructivism views humans as having multiple selves; which are socially constructed.
- Defined and negotiated through culture and time boundaries which are socially conveyed through language, context and environmental messages.
- 'truth' is a invention of daily exchanges in daily life. Therefore there is not one correct way for a human to live their life.

Psychology and multiculturalism

- Multiculturalism within psychology is founded on the concept of postmodern social constructivism.
- Researchers from the multicultural paradigm highlight the importance of our construal of worldviews of individuals and the life context derived from different cultures, and the influence that culture has on our understanding of reality.



Principles of traditional psychotherapy

- Traditional theories of psychotherapy during the last century have dichotomised the psychological life of the human into distinct parts.
- Have emanated from gender and culturally-biased perceptions of psychological development; valuing the importance of independence and autonomy over collectivity and interdependence.
- Both consider it incongruous to intervene or underrate interviewing in social dynamisms that restrict the psychological well-being of clients from diverse ethnicities or personal histories

Principles of postmodern psychotherapy

- The therapist assists in empowering the client; the client is the expert.
- Accepting responsibility for one's actions, considering choices and alternatives is involved in client change.
- Change is blocked by defeating core assumption, deconstruction of these assumptions is achieved through collaborative work by the client and therapist.
- the basis for constructive change originates with the clients strengths. The therapist's attention is on helping clients organise their strengths to deal with issues.



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As much space as we can
by Foluke Taylor

