Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.
Therapists’ Perceptions of Family Therapy

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Psychology at Massey University

Lesley Anne Phillips
1996
ABSTRACT

Family therapy in New Zealand is practised by people with a wide variety of training and experience. Twelve therapists from diverse academic and professional backgrounds were interviewed about their perceptions of family therapy. Analysis of the interviews using a Grounded Theory approach found that therapists used a variety of ways of distinguishing family therapy from other therapeutic approaches. They stressed the importance of adequate initial and ongoing preparation. Therapists' descriptions of the therapy process included the different ideas about therapy held by therapists and clients (and the resolution of these differences); metaphors of action and danger; and the varied outcomes of family therapy. Discussion of the social and professional ecology of family therapy illustrated some of the constraints under which it was practised.
Acknowledgements

First I would like to thank my supervisor, Cheryl Woolley, for all her support and guidance during this project.

Thanks also to my family, for their patience and encouragement, and for large amounts of practical help. And thanks to the friends whose company at difficult times made all the difference.

Finally and most of all I would like to thank the therapists, who generously gave their time and thought to the interviews. I spent many hours in their company, first during the interviews, then transcribing and reading the transcripts. As a result I have great respect and admiration for the care and attention they give their clients and their work, often under difficult circumstances.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ii
Acknowledgements iii
Table of contents iv

**PART ONE: Introduction**

Chapter One: Introduction and review of literature 1
Chapter Two Method 18

**PART TWO: The Results**

Chapter Three: Distinguishing family therapy 24
Chapter Four: Being prepared to do family therapy 46
Chapter Five: Ideas, action and outcomes in the therapy process 63
Chapter Six: Ecology 100

**PART THREE: Discussion, Summary, and Suggestions for further research**

Chapter Seven: Discussion 121
Chapter Eight: Summary and Suggestions for further research 137

References 140
Appendices 146