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Why Am I Here, And What Is Here Anyway?: A Social Constructionist Window Into Clinical Psychology.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of
Master of Arts
in
Psychology
at Massey University, Turitea , Palmerston North,
New Zealand.

Dean Adam

2001

Abstract

Understandings of why people enter into careers as clinical psychologists are underdeveloped. This thesis uses a social construction perspective to explore the question of how clinical psychology students explain their career choice, and in particular how expectations and understandings of a career in clinical psychology are constructed as influencing such a decision. Interview transcripts from six clinical psychology students were analysed using a combined methodology of Heideggerian hermeneutics and discourse analysis of a thematic nature. The themes developed outline how the participants constructed clinical psychology, the process of choosing such a career, related professions, what it meant to 'be' a clinical psychologist, and other peoples' perceptions of clinical psychology. The conclusion of these findings suggest the need for multidisciplinary awareness in the training of clinical psychologists, the need for an increased focus on long term career satisfaction and goal achievement, and attention to the education of the public about the role and utility of clinical psychology.

Acknowledgements:

This feels like the fun part of the thesis writing that I have been looking forward to ever since I started writing it, the opportunity to thank and appreciate all the people who have been a part of my life during the writing of this thesis.

The primary people I feel I need to thank are the participants, the students who provided the material I have based this thesis upon. While their contributions were brief, it was their words and ideas that guided and dictated the shape of this thesis, without them it would not exist.

However, other people outside the bounds of the research itself were essential to me. I would like to start with my dear friends Nicky and Julie, one for badgering me into completing this thesis and the other for supporting me in the completion, the times I wasn't working on it, and the times I simply didn't know what to do next – I'll leave you both to work out who did what.

I want to thank my friend Debbie for having faith in me, for giving me an odd look whenever I said 'there's plenty of time' and for her support and affection in the final days of this thesis, which gave me the energy to complete it.

It is hard to encompass all the people who have made life bearable in ways that promoted good thesis writing habits, but Edit you have my thanks for all your work and feedback in the final draft stages, Maria, thank you for your support and ongoing rewards, and Saleem, Karyn, Nick and JJ, thank-you for distracting me when I most needed it.

To all the people who have offered words of encouragement, you have my gratitude; to those who suffered getting their ears chewed for asking the 'hows the thesis going?' question, you have my apologies. You all contributed towards supporting me in the completion of this work, whether it was by making me believe I could, or reminding me that it was not going to happen on its own, Thanks.

Thank you all!

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Why Am I Here, And What Is Here Anyway?:

A Social Constructionist Window Into Clinical Psychology.

Throughout this thesis italicised paragraphs, such as this one, are to be found on the opposing page of the main thesis document. These sections represent my thoughts and ideas around particular aspects of the work. This style of commentary, known as reflexivity (Edwards & Potter, 1992), is an integral aspect of any constructionist-based work such as this thesis. While the importance of this concept is explained further when discussing the ontology of this thesis, it is necessary for you as the reader to understand the role of this commentary from the onset. Primarily, for me, being able to be reflective over the process of writing this thesis was to contribute to other students some of the considerations required in writing in such a style. Secondly and more commonly, reflexivity serves to make the research process transparent for the reader to maximise the validity of the research (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). By seeing my reasoning, and the assumptions behind why I have chosen to conduct my research in particular ways, it is hoped that you as the reader will be in a better position to judge the merits of this thesis. Additionally, reflexivity can provide a forum for the author to communicate with the reader in a more informal manner than is often allowed within an academic document, creating a sense of engagement between the reader and the myself and making the thesis more enjoyable to read.