

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: REVIEW OF *UNDERSTANDING NARRATIVE THERAPY*

We are pleased that Agathi Glezakos in reviewing our book *Understanding Narrative Therapy*, (Fall 2002) felt it was "a significant addition to the existing social work literature," and plans to integrate the knowledge into her teaching and clinical work. We have always appreciated her teaching and writing. We wish to comment on three items in her review.

Dr Glezakos writes, "The founder of the theory on Narrative Therapy is Michael White, a family therapist in Australia, who identifies himself as a social worker. The exact nature of his professional credentials is unclear." She raises the same question of "other authors who are recognized as experts." Society holds certain "therapies" as privileged. A post-modern view would be less concerned with credentials and more concerned with helping approaches that treat clients with respect and dignity, that are grounded in our humanistic perspective, and that are doable and effective.

In another section of the review she notes about the authors, "They are critical of the profession's ongoing search for its identity and recognition, and of its struggle to 'create a unifying practice methodology'." It would be important to look at the section in the book from which her selected quote and her subsequent assessment of it as our being "critical" appears.

"The profession has struggled to explicate and translate into practice its primary concern to develop among the members three practice capabilities: (1) improve persons' quality of life and social relationships through the development of individual and community well being, competence, and mutual responsibility; (2) effectively support individuality, cultural integrity, diversity, equality, and social justice; and (3) secure the social environmental modifications and institutional supports in keeping with such developmental efforts.

The struggle to achieve these ends, that is to create a unifying practice methodology that will allow the profession to accomplish this very complex mission and its contract with society, is ongoing. The story of how the profession came to accept such a multifaceted social contract offers some clues as to the reasons it has been unable to unify itself and develop an overarching methodology."

Rather than being critical of the profession, we believe its story is still being told and that Narrative Practice provides one way of approaching its overarching methodology and unifying a profession with such ideal and diverse missions.

The only other point we wish to make is related to a statement in her concluding paragraph. She says "Narrative Therapy is not a revolutionary approach to helping' Please note her earlier statement. "Narrative Therapy is a new paradigm; as it introduces some new practice techniques. The use of the Reflective Team, the Virtual Group, Mapping the Problem, Relative Influence questions, and Regular Letter Writing by the therapist to the client..." She did omit one of the major ideas, Externalizing the Problem, but that aside, it might not be quite accurate to say this is not a "revolutionary approach?" What other practice is she aware of that incorporates those ideas? Since "revolutionary" has many meanings, and while we might argue for it being "revolutionary" in a radical sense, we will settle for narrative practice as being in a process of "evolution" and we welcome the suggestions she makes.

Paul and Sonia Leib Abels

Copyright of Reflections: Narratives of Professional Helping is the property of Cleveland State University and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.