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Book Review

**Studies in Meaning 3:
Constructivist Psychotherapy in the Real World**

edited by Jonathan D. Raskin and Sara K. Bridges

New York: Pace University Press, 2008, Paperback, 379 pages, \$US 40

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reviewed by

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**AN ALTERNATIVE WORLDVIEW TO FAVOUR THE CREATION
OF PERSONAL ALTERNATIVES**

We began to fear that this series had prematurely come to a halt. Instead, six years following the first volume, *Studies in Meaning: Exploring Constructivist Psychology*, and four years from the second, *Studies in Meaning 2: Bridging the Personal and Social in Constructivist Psychology*, the third volume of the series edited by Jonathan D. Raskin and Sara K. Bridges, has been published.

Once again some of the most widely-known names of the diverse constructivist community have been called on to contribute to this volume. And again the editors have worked with a broad definition of psychological constructivism, maintaining its several expressions and derivations. In fact, the chapters making up this volume are written by authors that operate within personal construct psychology, social constructionism, the theory of autopoiesis, and narrative psychology: all approaches having their own identity, history, specificity, but sharing a similar epistemological matrix.

The main object of the volume is to refute the belief, still unfortunately widespread among clinicians, that constructivism mainly is a philosophical idea with few practical applications, including those in the field of psychotherapy. The contributions in-

cluded in the volume do indeed illustrate that constructivist therapy is well-suited to the expediencies of everyday clinical practice.

Following the two chapters introducing the basic approaches in constructivist psychotherapy (Raskin & Bridges) and the epistemological implications of constructivism for the consulting room (G. J. Neimeyer et al.), the second part presents in detail three different types of constructivist therapy: coherence therapy (Ecker & Hulley), a brief therapy suggesting the combination of the experiential and the neurophysiological levels of description for 'dispelling symptoms'; context-centered psychotherapy (Efran & Soler-Baillo), partly based on Maturana's theory of autopoiesis, particularly its implication of structural determinism; and experiential personal construct psychotherapy (Leitner & Faidley), a well-known elaboration of Kelly's therapy, here centered on the therapeutic implications of a constructivist understanding of the body.

The contributions of the third part of the volume are devoted to particular clinical problems dealt with a constructivist approach. A research project, using rep grids, in the treatment of domestic abusers

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(Horley & Johnson); a constructivist and social constructionist approach to play therapy with children (Watts & Garza); stuttering treatment based on a constructivist conceptualization of speech pathology (DiLollo & R. A. Neimeyer); methods of reconstruction with substance abusers by the adoption of a combination of rational-emotive-behavior therapy and constructivist psychology (Adelman); and the application of constructivist philosophy and practice to the process of divorce (Granvold), are the problematic issues chosen to illustrate the modality and the efficiency of a constructivist approach to clinical problems.

The fourth part deals with a number of commonly encountered professional issues: practising personal construct psychotherapy within the demands of a national health service setting (Winter); a constructivist counseling approach with multiracial clients (Priest & Nishimura); and a research on the particular problem of deciding when and how to challenge clients' constructions (Williams & Levitt).

The volume closes with a fifth part comprising an erudite dissertation, full of quotations, on the presence of constructivism in everyday life (Hoyt), and of an exploration on the implications deriving from an interpretation of constructivist therapy as a form of social critique (Paris).

It seems evident that the editors eagerly recommended the authors to include in their contributions many examples and clinical cases that could demonstrate in actual fact the applicability of the epistemological assumptions of constructivism to the clinical practice. The outcome is a work that, to my opinion, achieves the target aimed, but that also supplies numerous suggestions to those clinicians already aware of the power of the therapeutic applications of constructivism, so as to filling the gap that separates us

from the following issue of the series.

The editors have sensitively dedicated this volume to the several seminal figures lost since the preceding volume of the series: Michael J. Mahoney, James C. Mancuso, M. Laura Nuzzo, Tom Ravenette, Phillida Salmon, Theodore R. Sarbin.

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