

Extract from the book Inviting Reflexivity into the therapy room. How therapists think in action. Kuenzli, F. (2006). University Press of America, 2006 pp. 13-14.

Introduction

*“It is not necessary to know everything in order to understand something”
(Geertz, 1983, p. 120)*

In order to solve the constant and growing problems that we face in our practice, we, psychotherapists, cannot count only on the recipes or formulas learned at the University¹. We have to improvise, struggle, and create, to gradually build a repertoire of practical knowledge, to finally feel rather comfortable in our practice. Psychotherapists are left to deal with tasks that become increasingly complex, in a field that is now uncontrollable for the human mind. It is impossible nowadays to be aware of everything that arises in our field. Meantime our patients suffer from increasingly complex issues. Multiple diagnoses are our daily bread. Changing contexts, endless psychosocial stressors, substance dependence, social and family violence, and multiple traumas add up to the profound and complete transformation of family structures. The family that we took a few decades ago as the norm has become a bizarre singleton. Our theories are less and less a comprehensive approach to the complexity we face. On a planetary level, the technological changes and the growth of information request that each professional master techniques to solve new problems.

In the field of psychotherapy, *content knowledge* is not nearly enough. Content knowledge is more accessible than ever to our patient. A patient may have a more exhaustive knowledge of the existing treatment on his condition than his therapist because he has a strong investment in it. We are losing the control we thought we had over our field.

In a professional field that becomes daily more uncertain, and unstable, we need to know *how* we know. Therapists must seek a different kind of knowing that overarches the content knowing.

The purpose of this book is to explore and enhance the description of a psychotherapist's reflection-in-action (RIA). In other words, I try to approach, understand and clarify how a psychotherapist makes sense of his² work. Among many others, Geertz (1983) has inspired me by his reflections on local knowledge. He highlights the importance of approaching a phenomenon through narratives. He validates the attempt to define

¹ This work and research was first presented and accepted by an international committee of experts for a Doctorate in Psychology for the University of Lausanne, Switzerland in September 2004. A few changes have been made to publish the present book.

² The question of using a non-sexist language is in my mind. I will not sacrifice the readability of my text for a pompous use of both gender pronouns.

narratives by looking at the local definitions, and the vernacular. The work I present here is not a comprehensive process that aims toward a final definition. Rather, it is a continually evolving definition based upon a growing repertoire of narratives.

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