

ECOLOGIES OF VIOLENCE: IMPLICATIONS FOR THEORY AND PRACTICE

by

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DECLARATION

I, Linda Paula Pera, hereby declare that this dissertation of limited scope, entitled: “Ecologies of Violence : Implications for Theory and Practice” is my own work and that all sources I have used (or quoted) have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete referencing.

Signed:

Date:

Dedicated to those who believed in me,

Without judgement,

When I didn't believe in myself

And my own judgement

Was deafening.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I acknowledge, first, the many individuals who have contributed to my life experiences and those who have helped me achieve what I have up to this moment. Some have taken different paths and only their memories linger. Others walk along the same path and our interactions ebb and flow. Still others are those with whom I have yet to share. I send out, to all these people, my gratitude for helping me both transform and conserve.

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ABSTRACT

This postmodern dissertation examines three individual experiences of violence in South Africa, using the qualitative research method of heuristics. Using social constructionism as a lens for viewing the phenomenon, violence is seen as occurring within a specific ecology, which is part of the individual's fluctuating, subjective reality. This discussion proposes that the violent experience, to which meanings are attributed, is part of the individual's socially constructed ecology. This ecology can either be transformed or conserved through dialogue, specifically dialogue relating to the telling of the story of the violent experience. This is discussed in relation to therapeutic encounters. The primary objective of the research is the implication of ecological thinking generally and, more specifically, ecological thinking on violence, for therapeutic interactions and psychological theory. This discussion also refers to psychological ethics.

KEY TERMS

Transformation; Conservation; Violence; Ecology; Ecological thinking; Ecological therapy; Postmodernism; Social constructionism; Meaning making; South African ecology; Therapeutic ethics; Clinical psychology training

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