

Mens-Verhulst, J. van. (1998) Beyond Innocence: Feminist Mental Health Care and the Postmodern Perspective. In Henwood, K. Griffin, C. & Phoenix, A. Standpoints and Differences: Essays in the Practice of Feminist Psychology. London: Sage: 189-209.

CONCLUSION: ONGOING SOCIOGENESIS

It has to be concluded that women's liberation is an endless process, and the post-isms cannot be its guide. Postmodernism and post-structuralism seem to invite counsellors to refrain from any standpoint, feminist or otherwise. However, in feminist practices such an abstinence is not only technically impossible but also politically unthinkable and ethically unacceptable.

Technically, it is simply impossible to live permanently in the deconstructive mode. It would drive people crazy, therapists as well as clients. In order to practice, counsellors must maintain some beliefs about what people need and why, and what they can do as professionals. The 'post-isms', however, have little to say about the practices and knowledge that could replace the current ones.

Politically, the 'post-ism' games played with therapy can be unravelled from their own point of view. Then, the question arises who gains what and when by commitment to the rules. Following the 'post-ism' insights in power dynamics the games finally will serve some elite audiences in the continuation of their privileged positions and irresponsibilities, and analogous collective memories. And this elite will not be as degendered as suggested.

Ethically, the post-ism discourses suggest that liberating effects may be expected from the refusal of totalities and the embracement of difference, but they do not offer any positive vision of a good society, life or health care - and especially not in relationship to women.

Simultaneously, FMHC cannot escape from recognizing its activities as initially North European and Anglo, middle class and white oriented. Thus, it risks reproducing the very forms it struggles to break down. To avoid such 'innocence', a permanent critical feminist epistemological stance is required by which the collective and individual sociogenesis of women is creatively furthered. It promises a feminist posture that manifests itself by a gender-, power- and care-conscious perspective, which should also be applied to its own position and function: continually vigilant for oppressive tendencies in the prevailing constructions and imperatives and always willing to rethink them.