

TOWARDS RELATIONAL BECOMING!  
*AN INVESTIGATION*  
*ON*  
*CONFLICT NARRATIVES*



*TAHEREH BARATI*

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DISSERTATION

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**Tahereh Barati Bagherabad**

born on the 23rd of July 1966

Mashad, Iran

living in Toronto, Canada

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## ABSTRACT

This study explores the utility of relational being and relational map as guiding concepts in the practice of psychotherapy and mediation. This thesis is an exploration and showcase of the transformation of conflict narratives through collaboration and dialogue. Informed by narrative, relational, constructionism, and Deleuze's ideas on rhizomatic language, my approach is characterized by a not-knowing and curious positioning, multiple theoretical and narrative voices, and the co-construction of meaning.

The traditional discourse of psychotherapy is nurtured by dominant discourses of individualism. Psychotherapy and mediation, both developed within the general philosophical framework of individualistic discourses, focus on problems and the centrality of an individual. The result has been a sense of a fixed subjectivity (i.e. a stable and unchanging person) as well as divisiveness, which has led to what many refer to as the practice of othering.

In this thesis, the fundamental concepts of individualism are questioned. Alternative discourses emerging within relational and constructionist philosophies are explored and used to illustrate the inadequacy of individualistic accounting. The concept of self as relational being is introduced as opposed to self as bounded being (Gergen, 2015). The concept of self is used in this study as a theoretical tool, a practical tool and a research tool. This thesis employs discourse analysis and narrative analysis through illustrations that include attention to the negotiation of discursive regimes and their influence on human relations.

The relational analysis of problems in human relations avoids constructing people as determined within discourse and, instead, supports ways of stepping outside of dominant discourses to shape and reshape people's lives. Collaborative, relational, narrative practices of psychotherapy are illustrated as effective practices that address many sorts of conflict, including those influenced by tradition, power relations, culture, and economics.

The articles in this dissertation are grounded on the assumption that change is afforded by the conversational interactions of therapists and clients in a collaborative, dialogical manner. Participation and collaboration of both parties are central to the development of mutually acceptable interaction. Setting a stage for dialogue is vital in this process, as individuals are invited to experience and re-experience themselves in a dialogical way. This could facilitate steps towards reconciliation and connection between people as relational beings. Drawing on many philosophers and therapists, I examine how the collaborative construction of therapy is accomplished in these articles. I conclude this dissertation with a discussion of the limitations and implications for future investigation.