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Title: Preparing a supervision model for the aftermath of Grenfell: An auto-ethnographic inquiry of relationship-based supervision

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Further Information: The Social Work Company held part of the delivery contract for the service that was commissioned by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea after the fire at Grenfell Tower in 2017. The Social Work Company is a company limited by guarantee. As part of its duty of care to its employees, it contracted the two authors of this manuscript to provide clinical supervision for staff. This paper is a reflection by the two authors on their preparatory work for that consultancy contract.

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Abstract:

In this paper, we describe the preparation for the supervision approach that we used on behalf of the Social Work Company to supervise workers at the Grenfell Support Service. This paper centres on a moment of new consciousness concerning the formation of values that occurred when discussing a poem written by the first author, Deborah, during a narrative interview conducted by the second author, Hellmuth. We present the poem and use auto-ethnography to explore the new realisations that arose through the dialogue. We consider the multi-dimensional listening that created the opportunity for this new realisation and consider the conceptual resources that a dialogic theory of action might add to the practice of relationship-based supervision in social work.

## Introduction

The Grenfell Action Group had raised concerns about the safety of the building for some time before the fire on 14 June 2017 (Macleod, 2018). The extent of the fire, the loss of life (72 casualties) and the number of injuries (70) made it the worst peacetime fire in modern British history (Macleod, 2018). The catastrophic loss of life and the social conditions linked to the fire have some resonance with the Aberfan disaster on 21<sup>st</sup> October 1966, when 144 people (116 children and 28 adults) from the village school were buried by a mountain of waste from the local colmine. In both cases the community's clear warnings of a disaster, "went unheeded and no action was taken to address the situation. Until it was too late." (ICE, 2019). The media coverage of the fire at Grenfell Tower showed the devastating sequelae of not listening. Unfortunately, as we can see through the example of Aberfan, the link between not listening and catastrophic loss of life is not unprecedented. Listening to and acting on these warnings would likely have saved both communities from disaster. However, the simplicity of this statement belies the complexity involved in producing systems, structures and services that can deliver this. We argue that social work supervision has the potential to re-position social work practice as relational where through dialogically rooted practice, a renewal in the practice of listening might emerge.

This paper was written from our first-person perspectives to show (rather than tell) the dialogic roots of our supervision approach. We used this approach with workers employed by The Social Work Company at the Grenfell Support Service. The Social Work Company held part of the delivery contract for the service that was commissioned by the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea set up shortly after the fire at Grenfell Tower to provide residents with integrated service support. The Social Work Company is a limited company. As part of its duty of care to employees, it contracted the two authors of this paper to provide clinical supervision for staff. The priority for the Grenfell Support Service was to listen to the residents as a basis for action. The priority for supervision was to

listen to the workers' experiences of this practice. Our basic premise was that these interactions were the primary sites of practice at all levels of the social work system's ecology.

We used John Shotter's (Shotter, 2010, 2011) theory of dialogic action to frame the findings in this paper. Shotter suggested that inquiries that aimed to create hope and action for the change needed to move "away from what goes on inside people .... toward those focused on what people go on inside of" (2010, pg. 271). The elegance of this idea, which he built from, with and through the work of other philosophers and linguists, presented a radical challenge to most theories of change. Change is often conceived as something *one* may or may not contemplate, resist, support etc. where *one* is located on either side of an equation, of service provider/user, or help seeker/helper, but using empirical examples from an organisational change project, Shotter (2010) showed how changes in action arose from moments of dialogue *between* people. He termed these moments of 'living responsiveness' (pg 271). He emphasised language as an embodiment of experience, crafted by the social, moral and cultural concepts that surrounded the experience. He suggested these moments of living responsiveness were living because they provided a situated reorientation towards the problem, not a solution and action plan. They could, therefore be defined in terms of hope, where hope is conceived as a new consciousness that opens a fissure in a current reality to point towards a better future. In this paper, we captured and reflected on a moment of living responsiveness and will use the terms interchangeably, referring to living moments, moments of change and moments of hope.

Applying Shotter's dialogic theory of practice to the context of social work supervision for the residents who lived through the fire at Grenfell Tower meant that we needed to consider the contribution that trauma played in dialogue. The residents were all *inside of* a social catastrophe as well as facing personal distress, pain and trauma. Medev and Brockmeier (Medev & Brockmeier, 2015) suggested that trauma left people without access to a meaning framework needed to imagine a way to a better life. In such circumstances, dialogue was the only place that new beginnings were

likely to emerge. The problem was that for those listening the fragmented nature of the chaos narrative made listening even more difficult than it usually is (Frank, 2013; Medev & Brockmeier, 2015).

Creating the conditions for 'living moments' to occur in a chaos or trauma infused dialogue requires a philosophy and practice grounded in relationally based principles such as mutuality of respect and rooted in equality, where territories of knowledge and expertise are of equal value and valued for their diversity. This type of practice is more likely to be achievable in the context of service cultures that can; tolerate not knowing, learn from failure, give space for the evolution of identity (self and other), generate changes to the environment and explore the impact of those adaptations on evolution (see Browning et al. (2007) for relational pedagogy of learning in healthcare). All of these desirable cultural practices should be enacted through interaction and relationships at the micro-level.

However good the workforce might be at enacting these values interpersonally, services and their practices also need to be understood in the context of their position and place in society and the macro discourses around them. The circulating narratives that contain concepts about what a society believes to be indicative of a good life may limit or enable changes in practice. Narrative entanglements between macro-discourses and micro-practices may explain the limited reach of Munro's recommendations for relationship-based social work (Munro, 2011). Relationships are central to social work (Ingram & Smith, 2018; Ruch, 2005) and proponents of relationship-based practice argue that not only does social work require a stable and positive relationship to operate effectively, but that the relationship itself may benefit those who use social work services (Ruch, Turney & Ward, 2010). However, even in this conceptual space, Munro's re-legitimation of the concept of relationship-based social work practice (Ingram & Smith, 2018; Trevithick, 2014) has, according to some, had little effect on the structures of social work (Trevithick, 2014). The influence of these macro narratives may not be the only or even a significant factor in the lack of progress with

Munro's recommendations. We present a case for changing practices in social work education and supervision that are neither macro nor micro, neither interior nor exterior. Instead, we suggest that dialogic methods, along the lines given by Shotter, could be used in the meso ecology of practice (i.e., in social work supervision). This could further prioritise the nature of the relationships within social work, infuse practice with an imperative towards change and raise the opportunity for unique moments of change. These moments are defined as living responsiveness, offering moments of hope for the workers. By a parallel process, the hope created in supervision with the supervisor/worker relationship may extend to practices in communities. Supervision of this type and quality could fulfil all its main functions, managerial, educational and supportive (Kadushin & Harkness, 2002).

Returning to the micro-site of social work practice and the interior world of the workers, a focus on practitioner reflection is prominent (Davys & Beddoe, 2009). Ferguson (2018) suggested that a social work practitioner's abilities to reflect in action (Schön, 1983) were not always successful, but not because workers were unable to think in and on the situation in the same moment in practice. Rather, he suggested that facing the reality of the emotional and sensory response to the work required more than reflection, either on or in action. He recommended that workers should be supported to develop internal resources to become more aware of their own emotional responses to work that entails a high level of personal emotional resource. In essence, he surfaced the idea that facing the reality of their own response to the emotional work should be supported so that the natural response, which is to defend the self against emotions or sensations that threaten to overwhelm, could be understood and overcome in the interests of the work itself. Ferguson's focus on this dynamic highlights the need for a more relational orientation to the concept of practitioner reflection.

Like Ferguson, Brockmeier (2015) pointed out that, "we do not interpret our experience, but live it in the thick of ongoing events and entanglements, emotions and moods" (pg 175). Using examples from literary fiction, studies from language and narrative discursive practices, Brockmeier showed



how the imagined self is crafted through abstract imagination, creating memories from the past and memories imagined for the future. Narratives contain traces about how the person is living in, through, or against the social concepts that have formed their unique interpretation of what a good life is. Like Shotter, Brockmeier's thesis suggests that the micro and the macro are enfolded, and it follows therefore, that working with narratives creates an opportunity for practice to go beyond transactional, to discover more of the social context that the person is going on inside of. While the use of narratives in social work practice and social work education is not new (Riessman & Quinney, 2005) what we are seeking to highlight is the positive implications that biographically focused narrative supervision might have for the social work workforce (Fischer & Goblirsch, 2006).

Brockmeier (2015) suggests, "our identities are not given to us, but made by us" (page 172) and that biographical narrative practices are pivotal to both the construction of memory and identity. Taking a narrative perspective on supervision highlights the social function of language and its relationship to identity. Supporting the ongoing development of identity is relevant for workers, those whose work involves receiving services and those whose work involves service design and transformation. We chose to write this article from our first-person perspectives, including personal biographical histories, a poem that arose from abstract imaginative experience and reflections on our own dialogue. In this dialogue, we practised a narrative interview as preparation for working together. During the dialogue a moment of living responsiveness occurred.

The aim of this paper is to share the ontological basis for our relationship-based supervision approach with as much transparency as possible. The ontology was formed through a blend of narrative-based intervention theory (White & Epston, 1990) and theories of practice-based intersubjectivity (Landor, Todd, & Kennedy, 2011) that we had experienced. These theories are embodied and uniquely interpreted through the concepts we have learnt to live by. Our discussion centred on the poem provided and the moment of living responsiveness was related to it. The symbols and concepts in the poem are enmeshed in the paper as we work through an auto-ethnographic lens. The reproduction of the poem should enhance readers' ability to engage with the material.

Although we acknowledge and affirm the role for poetry in health and social care workforce development, the use of poetry per se to aid reflection in social work practice is not a priority. Its role in social work practice and education has been raised by others, for its potential to enhance empathy and perspective in social workers and students (Furman, Coyne, & Negi, 2008; Furman, 2005).

### *Methods and Materials*

It is unconventional to separate voices in an academic paper, although not without precedent (Phipps & Saunders, 2009). Our choice in presenting the paper in this format mirrored the choice we made in the creation of the supervision model: we committed to a relational supervision approach where meaning was co-constructed with the aim of generating a greater understanding of self, other, place and practices. The structure and grammar of this paper reflected our single perspectives, addressed in the question, how is it that you came to be here?, our multiple voices in discourse (addressed in the question of the learning derived through the narrative interview), and our shared voice as we discussed the meaning of our new understandings of supervision in the discussion.

The narrative interview centred on a discussion about the poem (given below) that Deborah had written just before the fire.

### Broke for the Broken

It used to be when I was young that I would strum some simple chords, the tune would come with words of love

Passed over

Set aside, apart not quite enough, not quite the fit you had in mind,

And I was cold when I was young, left to face the truth

Alone

Splintered space - smoothed over

And then one day I met a man, he looked like he was made of wood, a rugged face with  
creviced lines that creased

And as I traced my story back he closed his eyes and all that wood began to creak and crack  
as he bent over

Doubled up in pain it seemed by just the words that I released - my pain - enough to bend  
an oak in two

He never looked at me again, the next I saw he took my pain and used it as a power pack to  
penetrate beneath our feet

Oh weeping man - come back, don't leave, maybe it wasn't as bad as it had seemed!

And as he drilled into the earth, dust and muck and mess churned up and covered me

I felt the dirt in every pore, my skin was rough and cracked and lined, splitting dry and  
broken wounds

I thought I would disintegrate

Then thunder rolled beneath my feet, like tumultuous applause, whoops of joy beneath the ground, from deep dark down The sound rolled over

And there I stood

All broken up

But the sound of his ascent meant I could see and hear and think and feel

I didn't need to see his face to know it was my weeping man who shot up in front of me

Passed over - he passed over

Up and up til all I saw was like the brightest star burn up the dark

All over - it's all over

After a while I picked up the broken pieces of myself, we walked back into the self before the pain smoothed over

To find the lines that really made me, me

I don't fill, or prime, or plaster, the lines remind me of the day he turned into the grave

Because my pain, it was my pain that sent him diving all the way to hell and back

My pain – he went to take it all away

Cross

Crossed over

He crossed over

Hellmuth used a narrative interview structure derived from the work of White and Epsten (1990) and we video-recorded the interview for individual and joint reflective practice. We also recorded the interview to show the workers one of the supervision approaches that we planned to use with them.

This paper was written from a personal biographical perspective. The question, “how is it you came to be here?” was answered by both of us through a biographical narrative frame and created the basis of the materials of this paper. We then drew out the results through a presentation of our separate reflections of a narrative interview that was video-recorded and transcribed as we prepared for the work at the Grenfell Support Service. The discussion to this paper draws on conceptual resources from our supervision practices, psychoanalytical psychotherapeutic approaches and concepts from arts-based and narrative methods.

Ethical governance of the work was negotiated between us at the outset of the project and then before and during the preparation of this paper. The interview took place during a short lunch break at a departmental away day in the North East of England in the Autumn of 2017. We video-recorded the interview. It lasted 22 minutes.

*Materials*

*Deborah, how is it that you came to be here?*

I started life in South East London and grew up in a council estate in Welling, Kent<sup>i</sup>. I loved singing and rhyming when I was young and I was encouraged to develop my voice in the local Methodist Church. I started my career as a speech and language therapist in the National Health Service. During my academic career, I retrained in Video Interaction Guidance and used this intervention in projects on workforce development in health/social care.

At around the time of the fire I had written a poem (see Appendix A). In preparation for our work together, I gave the poem to Hellmuth to read. The poem shows the response of an oak man to my song of pain. His response leads to recognition of myself as broken and a recognition of other people's contribution to my understanding of myself.

*Hellmuth, how is it that you came to be here?*

Growing up in South Africa during the 1970s and 80s, brought unique challenges. I was the second born of a family of five, proudly Afrikaans and South African. The school system was separated on the grounds of race, as were the neighbourhood, church and the health system. Like most other young white men, I completed my military service after completing school. At university, I became actively involved in politics. This was the first time that I experienced active push-back to the politics I was interested in. At school and during my time as a conscript in the army, I realised that my views were very different from that portrayed by the then government. At university, I became involved in student politics that was regarded as being, for an Afrikaans speaking person, rather left-leaning.

I qualified as a social worker in 1991 and started working for the local government. Training in narrative therapy methods as a voluntary counsellor for the Truth and Reconciliation commission in South Africa after apartheid, I learnt that telling and re-telling the traumatic events can be just as painful as the original event (White, 2003). I saw this first hand. Simply re-telling an experience, or understanding the feelings and thoughts associated with it, does not help, or at least not for

everyone. Trying to unpick why things are painful or difficult is, from a narrative perspective, just as important as understanding the event. Bringing the deeply rooted motivations and conceptual beliefs that fuel commitment to the purpose of people's unique ideation of the meaning of their being is often missed out of therapeutic approaches (White, 2003).

## *Results*

### *Deborah, what was learnt during in the narrative interview?*

Hellmuth said that he thought the poem, "nearly visually represented the pain". I was surprised and responded with, "that's interesting", a phrase I sometimes use when I am not sure how else to respond. I remember thinking that Hellmuth was putting something into my story and my response was to return to myself. I closed my eyes and returned in my mind to the place where I wrote the poem. From there I went on to talk about my theory of pain, with thoughts that it should neither be covered over nor intruded into. Rather like the poem, my view was that the most important thing about pain was that it had a response. I explained how I felt as though my pain was smoothed over during childhood with the consequence that for a long time I had limited or no resources to explore the pain as an adult. It was "just something I had to have inside of me". I explained how I thought that pain could only be generative when it is witnessed, and witnessing meant more than seeing, it meant resonance, leaving a trace that results in action. During this part of the interview, I was theorising and I was aware of that at the time. I had turned myself into Hellmuth's teacher, retreating and returning with a theory that I used to create a wall around me.

Hellmuth went on to surprise me by saying that he saw bravery, courage and diplomacy. He asked about other times when I had acted out diplomacy and courage. This time, instead of retreating I talked about how I had learnt through failure what my values were. The transcript went as follows:

Hellmuth: Oh, fantastic. So, the other thing that I'm hearing is coming from... from the courage and how you execute the courage, is... I don't know about the better word – but diplomacy.

Deborah: Well, I'm learning it. Because I started off, you know, basically sticking my neck out, irritating people, being this, like... moral voice. Or the one that would always say what other people were thinking, but didn't have the courage to say. And, obviously, that... That doesn't always go down well, at all. So, through making mistakes, I've realised that it's not something I can never stop doing. But I can change the way I do it.

Hellmuth went on to ask how I had learnt that value. I found myself surprised again, but this time because in the moment I was able to understand something that I had been unable to work out by myself.

Hellmuth: Where did you learn this...? This courage? And this... The bravery that we spoke about. And also the diplomacy?

Deborah: That's so interesting. Do you know, I...? I mean, I think for about the last... Certainly three to seven years, I've been dealing with my own personal pain. One of the first poems I ever wrote about was about racism. And I remember even as a little girl feeling how wrong that was. I remember feeling that so strongly as a child. And so, it sort of surprised me, I suppose, that when I was trying to, like, get this pain out of my body by writing poems, that that's the kind of stuff I would write about. You



know, the injustice that I felt. I knew it was wrong as a child. So, I don't know how that gets there. Like, I'm sure there's some people...

Hellmuth: So, in some way it's something that you picked up, nearly, from your surroundings. It was... It was a personal awareness. Not something that you learnt somewhere.

In this moment of realisation, which occurred between Hellmuth's question and my turn, I felt a new understanding of the connection between social goods (or moral truths), the witness of those social goods (including the violation of them) and myself. This moment led to an opening of new understanding as at the end of the turn I struggled to think *how* that pain had got in there. I caught a glimpse of myself as social in a new way. I recall, and still can just about recreate, a very fleeting visual image that accompanied this realisation. The image was of a mist, moving amidst a shape. It was in the corner of my eye, like a doodle on the margins of a manuscript. It was as if I caught a glimpse of a connectedness that could not be reduced to an individual, interaction between individuals or by a single line of connection amongst a group, like seeing something that I had, "picked up from my surroundings".

A little later, Hellmuth's questioning helped me summarise this new realisation and relate it to the purpose of the interview.

Hellmuth: And how...how that develops. So, what, actually, that pain represents is, perhaps those values that are being hurt.

Deborah: Oh, that is so interesting. That's so interesting, because that's where those first poems came from. And that's about social injustice. And that shocked me, because I have much more personal pain that I could've written about.

And, so, why was it racism that I was writing about when I was in so much pain? That is about the inherent value of... Of human being. The inherent value of another person. So, that's already, slightly... That's more about my values than my particular personal story. That's interesting.

During the interview I learnt that a narrative approach could help surface new realisations related to the values that were most important to me. I learnt the value of narrative methods in supervision because I experienced its value in helping me understand something about myself that I could not do by myself. Before the interview I had some reservations about the idea that pain was a representation of a value. These reservations were clearly expressed in my response to Hellmuth's initial response that pain represented something (in the first extract). However, by the third extract, I could relate to Hellmuth's idea about pain and values because he helped me to understand something about my own value formation which was intimately and inextricably bound up with my upbringing and other events in my personal biography. I literally saw myself as connected to something that was social beyond personal/relational sociability, in the fleeting visual image during extract 2. This was a new way of seeing. It has given me new ways of understanding the role of culture and society in child/family development and identity.

*Hellmuth, what was learnt during in the narrative interview?*

I had a number of conversations with Deborah about our previous work, about a shared interest in how we work alongside people and, perhaps more importantly, about a shared value-base. Reading the poem for the first time brought about a different image of Deborah. Although I knew her as both a colleague and a friend, for me the poem that she wrote and we discussed spoke of the pain that was taken away or absorbed by the oak. I wondered what the elements of the poem represented, trying to think what angle to approach it from. I remembered the ideas of Bojé (2011), talking about

antenarratives, the stories before people impose a structure on them, and not being sure if I should impose my own understanding on this clearly very personal and emotional story about dealing with and sharing pain. With my interest in narrative ways of working, I was not so much interested in the causes of the pain, rather what the pain represented. What were the values that were not respected, that could have caused the experience of pain?

The one thing I realised again using the narrative approach was the privilege it provides to listen to the stories people tell us. The stories people tell us are often problem-orientated or tend to focus on the negative. When looking at people's hopes and values, we hear stories such as Deborah's courage and diplomacy in difficult situations, her bravery and her commitment to social justice. For me, the act of listening becomes a privilege. Looking back, I wish I had more time to spend, more time, to "loiter" in her story as White (2000) said. I would have wished to spend more time exploring what she had realised about the role of 'witness' in relation to her account of pain.

### *Summary of Findings*

The narrative interview created a moment of changed consciousness. The use of the poem, the dynamic of trust between us and our joint belief in the purpose of the interview may have set the conditions for this relatively rapid success in creating a new moment of realisation.

### *Discussion*

Our aim in writing this paper is to show relationally based dialogic practice in action and to show the ontology of the supervision practice we used with the staff at the Social Work Company. The original intention in recording the narrative interview was to develop a supervision model by drawing on a synthesis of our narrative therapeutic practice (White & Epston, 1990) and principles of attuned, intersubjective dialogue (Landor et al., 2011). We used John Shotter's theory of dialogic action

research (2010) and, to a lesser extent, Jens Brockmeier's theoretical framework on memory and narrative (2015) to structure our observations.

We reported and reflected on a moment of a new consciousness that was accomplished in the dialogue between us. Following Shotter's (2010) definition, we refer to this as a moment of 'living responsiveness'. The moment began during an episode of reflection on experiences of failure, which was depicted in the first extract by Deborah. That reflection was followed by a fleeting visual image that was associated with a fragmentary opening to a new understanding of the developmental embodiment of the concepts of right and wrong. This moment occurred during the second extract. Finally, the discourse that followed was related to the concept of values. Separating the 'moment' of realisation into three extracts helped to communicate in writing, which is a sequential uni-modal form of expression, what was a transitory complex moment where a visual image encapsulated simultaneous thoughts, feelings and images from the past and appeared to show something useful for the future. Moments like these are hard to put into words but separating the dialogue at least showed the sequence in which this moment was nested.

Another way to communicate complex ideas like this is through metaphors. Speaking retrospectively, it could be described like this, 'It was as if I was loosely holding a net called "social goods", but I didn't have a tight grip on it. I had no real purpose or intent. Then a butterfly flitted past and for a moment the net seemed to come to life and it captured the butterfly. It blinked its colour at me as it refused to be held captive, but that flash of beauty and its promise of potentiality aroused desire to see more.'

The anticipation that there was more to know about the developmental embodiment of 'social goods' became a generative orientation for my supervision and my academic practice and it helped me understand much more of the depth of narrative therapeutic methods, which I had read about and admired, but not experienced before. This moment also led to a deeper set of thoughts about the purpose of pain and a reorientation to the value of pain as generative.

Ferguson's paper (2018) raised awareness of the embodiment of practice and the enactment of 'self'. Whilst there were some resonances with our findings and with Shotter's theory, Ferguson's idea is expressed in relation to what is going on inside the worker as he focused on the defensive role that fear and anxiety play in social workers. Practices that used embodied knowledge that could create 'living responsiveness' in day-to-day interactions (Shotter, 2010). Shotter suggested these moments contain the essence of new beginnings because they emerge within the social/moral surroundings and are infused with familiar referents of *how to be*. These moments do not occur or reside in the head of a single individual – the referents of how to be – our conceptual resources – are alive and illusive - flitting about in the spaces around us and travelling across time in the places between us. The picture painted in the poem shows that *listening* and *acting* was initiated through an affect response, but the trajectory and propulsion of the response were drawn out by forces in unseen social histories and communities. In the poem, the movement of the oak man created hope for a new beginning when, at last, the cover is blown and the reality of the fragmented self becomes visible and therefore tolerable. Moments that create hope for new beginnings are neither interior nor exterior, they are neither cognitive nor emotional nor embodied but are fused and infused with all the material we use in the essential primary endeavour 'to be' (Winnicott, 1971).

Turning to situate our findings in relation to social work practice, we consider Ferguson's recent detailed study of the use of the self in social work practice (2018). Ferguson's report centred on interviews conducted with social workers after they had been observed in practice. He reported that social workers were not well equipped to reflect on their thoughts and feelings in practice. Our use of auto-ethnography bypasses the difficulties entailed in asking for retrospective accounts of practice through an interview. It avoids the feeling that workers failed to give a good account of their practice and it avoids the reporting of imagined memories (see Brockmeier, 2015). According to Brockmeier, memories and imagination are part of the same neural process with imagined memories and imagined future memories occurring frequently in narratives. Reflection itself is not

an act of retrieval from a memory archive where the task is to dredge up lost or fading elements of a scene, reflection can be described as a narrative practice. A way of narrating oneself through an idealised and imagined perspective on oneself in relation to another. Seeing reflection as constructed through memory in this way neither diminishes the role of reflection for practitioner development or its use research. It does, however, offer a different orientation on reflection which could change our ideas of how to structure its use in social work supervision. Ferguson's paper elicits a deeper vertically based perspective on social work through an examination of its role in the working relationship. Like Ferguson, we also offer a new orientation on reflection and reflective practice.

### *Application*

The practices of systemic and narrative-based practices and Video Interaction Guidance, which we used were part of the context in which the moment occurred. Both these practices are used in the education and training of workers in the United Kingdom and further afield (Fukkink, Trienekens & Kramer, 2011; White, 2003). Our narrative interview lasted 22 minutes. The intersubjective dialogic and narrative techniques used here were adapted for use in social work supervision. In a separate paper (Weich, Newport & James, in preparation) we describe how we adapted the techniques for supervision with the Social Work Company. We think that supervision methods that provide an experience of how we learn and live through our values, which can be stimulated through narrative and arts-based and visual methods, can and should be used in a values-based profession. In our view, none of the current categories of social work supervision (i.e., support, management and education) provide a home for the type of relationally focused supervision that we have developed. We argue that supervision should focus on the process of bringing about change through creating moments where new hope, in the face of sometimes overwhelmingly difficult circumstances can be sought, expected and reflected upon by both participants in the relationship. In this way, social work supervision could mirror the practices that society needs from social work.

Finally, Marion Milner's book, 'A life of One's Own' (1934), is considered a seminal work of autoethnography. Puckey, in her master's thesis (2014) explored Milner's writing and accounts of her work as a psychotherapist to consider the role of creativity in psychotherapy practice. She recommended creativity as essential for practitioners not only for its role in generating new foci for conscious reflection but also for the deeper connection that it opens in relationships, including the therapeutic relationship. In our paper, the poem set up a triadic, rather than a traditional dyadic, structure to the conversation. This could have expanded the potentiality of the conversation. The content of the poem offered the potential for deep discussion, but it also became an object of shared meaning-making. We suggest that it created the conditions for secondary inter-subjectivity (see Landor et al., 2011) where knowledge of the self and other was expanded because of the presence of a third object *and* the intent of both parties to make meaning of the self and other by listening. In this paper, we highlighted the multi-dimensional (self, other, community), simultaneous (my emotions, your responses, their responses in the past, present and future), multi-spatial (racism in South Africa and in Welling, Kent) acts of listening that surrounded this moment of new realisation and new possibility.

In this paper, we have shown how listening in a relationship helped connect fragments of meaning and create a story that put the person into a place. The individual becomes able to see herself as part of a community, part of a body, connected.

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<sup>i</sup> Welling is in South East London in the London Borough of Kent and it is where Deborah James grew up. At one time, Welling was the headquarters of the British National Party. It is a mile or so, from Eltham where the British teenager, Stephen Lawrence, was murdered for being black on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1993.