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Justice in Therapy: an autoethnography

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
of
Masters of Counselling
at
The University of Waikato
by
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THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

2014

for Bob

there needs to be a word for so present / so very
absent - in the same moment

Acknowledgements

My parents, Phyl and Joe, the source and the heart of many of these stories.

My beloved family – I couldn't do it without you.

Kathie Crocket, my university supervisor - heartfelt thanks for your unerring care, patience and flexibility in addition to the skillful and generous sharing of your knowledge as you encouraged the voice of mine.

My friends and colleagues who have travelled this study, and life, with me in so many supportive ways, with special mention to Aileen Cheshire for proof reading, rich conversations and the cheer on to the home run!

Abstract

Questions of social justice are a central concern to the profession of counselling and at the same time readily overlooked perhaps because of the infusion of individualism and humanism out of which counselling emerged. This thesis is an autoethnographic study of my history of an orientation of views and actions towards social-and-cultural justice. The intention of the study is to explain this history and show how it influences a centering of justice in my current counselling practice. This autoethnography is more than a story: any retelling is performative. The study thus tells of the shaping of my counselling practice and further shapes my practice as I elaborate the links between my lived experience and the practices of poststructural therapeutic work. This elaboration begins in my early childhood in a Quaker family in New Zealand: for example, I recount children's stories that centred matters of justice. The focus then moves to the wider culture encountered in my adult life, shaped amongst other experiences by chosen alternative life-styles, the humanistic human potential movement, single parenthood, feminism, and my introduction to voluntary counselling through Youthline. The third focus traces the later development of my therapeutic practice, showing the influence of family therapies and the emergence of narrative therapy. Woven throughout these three life phases are accounts of efforts to live out social-and-cultural justice, with others' voices threaded through my own.

My hope in this writing is to take the reader to their own histories of justice and the practices of these in their therapeutic work, with a view to keeping this conversation alive.

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Chapter One: Autoethnography as a way of studying the research questions

Our own subjective singularities are in truth, composed, on the one hand, of many other near or distant humans, we are carriers of previous generations, we are, without knowing it, heirs, caretakers, witnesses of known or unknown ancestors; on the other hand, we are full of others originating from the books we have read. (Cixous, 1994, as cited in Gannon, 2003, p.125)

Similarly Davies' reading of Foucault suggests that we should not sign our names to the texts we write, but instead sign "the names of those who had the conversations in which the ideas for the writing emerged" (Davies, 2000, as cited in Gannon, 2003, p.27). As I write, I have with me those who have shaped this particular story into being in their nurturing the girl child and young woman who grew from the roots of their beliefs, actions and ways of living. I feel the pain as I write, of traversing this connection to this past, as in the present we walk together, my mother and I, with the loss of her incredible capacities to Alzheimers. As I am remembering, and being 're-membered' (White, 1997; explanation follows) to her and our shared history in this writing, she is so painfully lost, as she forgets. My hope is that as Gannon writes so evocatively: "Writing becomes a practice of love that strives to access the other and to allow the other to come through us:..." (2003, p.25). In this other that comes through are my mother, the generations of Quaker activists that came before her; and my father, Joe, and the deeply felt convictions he carried so close to his thinking and actions.

Remembering practices were developed for use in counselling by Michael White (1997, 2007), who referenced the work of Myerhoff, an American anthropologist. Myerhoff worked with an elderly Jewish community in

Venice beach, California. She described this community as having special ways of re-membering, by telling and re-telling stories of their histories. She wrote; "Without re-membering we lose our histories and our selves. Time is erosion, then, rather than accumulation" (in White, 1997, p. 20). White described people as having membered lives, using the metaphor of a 'club of life', and that these members influence how we experience ourselves. He found that re-membering practices assisted people to connect with significant others, alive or dead, who may stand beside them, strengthening their connections to relationships that might support new directions, assist in challenges to problems, and sometimes ease a sense of isolation.

This notion of re-membering also suggests possibilities and provides opportunities for persons to more directly acknowledge the important and valued contributions that others have made to their lives. When these opportunities are taken up into re-membering practices, these other persons generally experience this as significantly honouring of them. As well, in engaging in these acknowledgements of the contributions of others, one experiences one's own life being more richly described.... The sense of being joined in this way, and of experiencing one's life more richly described, contributes to new possibilities for action in the world. (White, 1997, p.23)

Thus autoethnography could be described as a re-membering process and one that both honours others who have contributed to my life, alongside an exploration of my own experiences and relationships that are relevant to this study.

The topic for this thesis began in a conversation about my work in an outsider witness (White, 1997, 2007) process in peer supervision. Outsider witnessing is a clearly structured therapeutic process that forms a way for an individual or group to listen and respond, as an audience, to a telling of a story of an aspect of someone's life. The audience then responds with a re-telling of significant aspects of the telling they were drawn to, embodied

in their own experience, including how they have been contributed to, transported, as being moved or taken somewhere new, by what they have heard.

In the supervision context that I describe here, the conversations or stories told are about the work and professional lives of three counsellors, Aileen Cheshire and Dorothea Lewis and me. This particular conversation had the purpose of a re-telling of significant aspects of my practice in feedback to Kathie Crocket, then my university programme supervisor, as part of my professional study for a Masters of Counselling. The conversation took place during Kathie's practicum visit to me in the context of my professional practice. I then became an audience to Aileen and Dorothea's re-telling. "The re-tellings of the outsider-witness group have the effect of *rescuing the said from the saying of it* (Geertz, 1973), the told from the telling of it" (White, 1997, p.94). This audience, or listening position, provides a 'pause' to notice something said that might otherwise disappear in the ongoing telling of the conversation. The re-telling of my supervision group, followed by another re-telling of the re-telling by Kathie, did very much 'rescue the told' of that supervision conversation to the extent it has developed into this thesis.

Dorothea began the witnessing by saying: "What stands out so strongly in Jan's work is its political view. Sometimes I can lose sight of this thinking myself. But she has an acute awareness around politics; of power, social contexts, discourses; she goes there quickly and acutely. It is always relevant, and then I say to myself "Why didn't I think of that?... Of course!"

Aileen then followed, saying, "It's a sharpness, the difference in perspective, a way of thinking I have not thought of. It invites me to consider something not considered. Yet it is creative and what is offered is very easy to step up to; it's very connected and offered in an invitational way. It is both how, and the personal as well, there is so much warmth... What is important, though, is her attending to relationship, first and foremost; it holds the other threads."

My response was one of both surprise and recognition. Much of the thinking and stance that informs this practice I take for granted, yet as my colleagues witnessed my centering what they called 'political' - meaning aspects of social justice in my work - their witnessing resonated with my values, hopes and intentions for my counselling work, and life. For me, these are inseparable.

As I considered Aileen's and Dorothea's responses, the possibility of a research project, focusing on justice in counselling practice emerged. I considered how I might investigate justice in counselling. I thought of researching ideas of justice in counselling work by also interviewing other therapists about how they bring these ideas into their practice. While this would also be a valuable project, another colleague and friend, David Epston, who knew of my background, challenged me instead to focus on my own life influences and their effects on my practice. This led me to ask myself; "What is the source of this centering of the political, of justice?" While I instantly knew that growing up a Quaker was the most significant influence, David's challenge made me start thinking about the 'how' of this learning and its particularities. My subsequent reflections, this question, and further conversation about its implications, led to the decision to make a more substantial enquiry into the politics of my practice and to trace its histories. I understand such an enquiry to be at once personal, professional and political.

In the accounting for my current thinking and professional practice, as a counsellor and supervisor, and the journeying to and from its inception, autoethnography offers a close fit as a way to research stories of the self. A quote from Minnie Bruce Pratt in Jones (2008) resonated strongly with me in its capturing of both the theory and action of autoethnographic research coming from life stories, and also the 'actions' I take in counselling which are so strongly influenced by these same stories, which then connected to the theory of narrative practice. She writes: "We cannot move theory into action unless we can find it in the eccentric and wandering ways of our daily life...[Stories] give theory flesh and breath"

(Pratt, 1995, as cited in Jones, 2008, p.205). My hope is to give practices of justice 'flesh and breath', both in the writing of the stories of their inception and then in the stories of their influence on my counselling practice.

I also contextualise my memories and stories in the movements and counter movements of their time. As Denzin writes, "Current autoethnography has been described as 'a turning of the ethnographic gaze inward on the self (auto), while maintaining the outward gaze of ethnography, looking at the larger context, wherein self experiences occur'" (Denzin, 1997, p.227).

Gannon also addresses the relationship between the personal and the wider context in autoethnographic research when she writes;

The process might be understood as a sort of weaving where the warp of the personal is woven against the weft of the socio-historico-political, contexts within which 'the personal' is lived and comes to make sense. This is a recursive and a rigorous weaving. After the spinning of memories, the patterns in each text are unravelled, examined and contested with the intent of identifying the discursive threads with which the memories are woven. (2003, p.38,39)

I have refined the initial question I asked myself; "What is the source of this centering of the political, of justice?" into three that I answer in this thesis, setting me on a journey of discovery and rediscovery. These questions explore some history and then connect this history with my current counselling practice.

The overall research question is: "How do I account for my counselling practice that has social and cultural justice at its center?" This question then breaks down into "What is the *history* of this centering of justice, that continues into my current counselling practice?", which I cover in Chapter Two, in stories of my growing up. Chapter Three then takes this question into some of the experiences in the next phase of my life on leaving

home, and a first encounter with counselling. Then Chapter Four describes aspects of my current counselling work with the question, “What is it about post structural therapeutic ideas that supports this social– and-cultural-justice in counselling practice?”

Chapter One now continues the discussion of autoethnography as a means of answering these research questions.

This autoethnographic writing is predicated on some understandings that fit closely with my counselling practice, coming from similar post structural ideas. Narrative therapy is the way of thinking that is one of the main resources for my practice as a therapist. It is predicated on the idea that people live multi-storied lives, and the concept that they make meaning of these stories with what is available to them at the time, in reflection and in relation with others (White & Epston, 1990). More of these ideas will be discussed in Chapter Four, but it is important to note here that the stories I tell weave just a few threads of a whole, always unfinished piece (life). I will also make meaning of these stories in the light of the thesis questions described above. Autoethnography also is predicated on people making meaning. As Denzin describes:

Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the research and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape an enquiry. Such researchers emphasise the value-laden nature of enquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress *how* social experience is created and given meaning. (Denzin, 2000, p.8)

Autoethnography takes qualitative research towards the end of the spectrum wherein the researcher could be seen to be the most intimate in the researching of self.

Different meaning could be made of any of the ethnographic stories I tell. They are particularly constrained by the research questions, the main ‘lens’ through which I choose and uncover them.

Muncey describes autoethnography as critically different from other research, using the analogy of different uses of train rides - adventure travel and commuting:

I think a great deal of research is like the commuters' journey: a predictable shuffle between expected destinations, with safety and comfort the desired outcome but with no hint of adventure. Autoethnography could be likened to an adventure; setting off the map and compass and some understanding of the territory but not hidebound by expectations or predictability. (2010, p.63)

It is with some trepidation that I embark on this journey that is more adventure travel in such new territory!

There is an area that produced discomfort when I first approached the idea of autoethnography. I was filled with doubt about a project that centred my own background. What could others hope to gain from my own story? My background was filled with privilege; not in material terms or money, but in a childhood rich in love, respect, stimulation and a high regard and support for education. Gannon, citing Lather, writes of the complexity of the discursive context of autoethnographic writing as it reflects on past, present and future moments:

Poststructural autoethnography, would emphasise discontinuities, it would search for disjunctures and jarring moments. It would commit to "personal writing that is scandalous, excessive and leaky ... based in lack and ruin rather than plenitude" (Lather, 2000), rather than to seamless linear stories of coming to "know" ourselves. But to the extent those seamless stories do appear, alongside the leaky ones, they are of interest in a Foucauldian analysis, as evidence of the current practices of writing the self, and of producing the self. (2003, p.286-287)

Most of the stories I write here could be described as '*linear*' and '*seamless*' as this is not a full 'life story,' but rather stories chosen to illustrate the roots of justice in my lived experience. Narrative therapy also

aims to bring forward the stories of people's lives outside the territory of the 'problematic' which can be so reducing of preferred identities, as well as moments of resistance to a problem's influence. Similarly I recognise the potential power in memories and stories that support preferred identities; that these too might make a difference. My hope is for this focus to have some value for the reader; perhaps even a collaboration where the reader is taken to their own stories that reflect their contexts, positions, perhaps journeys around areas of justice and in particular how this translates into justice in counselling practice.

Muncey also discusses the potential for discomfort in stories of the self when she writes;

Isn't it rather self-indulgent talk about yourself in this way? Isn't it just self-promotion, all baring the soul to elicit sympathy? My first response to this is to explain that, like other researchers, the autoethnographer really believes that they have something to contribute to enhance other people's understanding of society. Mykhalovskiy (1996, p.147) provides an excellent response to the accusations of self-indulgence by stating that, far from being a solitary process, writing only for those who produce it, an autoethnography is a social process of engaging with a readership, 'a dialogic and collaborative process', with an author prepared to engage with the critical reviewer and the wider social processes. The real test of self-indulgence must be: do you, the reader, find anything of value in what has been written? (2010, p.93)

I found it liberating to think of autoethnography as a social and collaborative process: my practice as a counsellor has such an emphasis, as I explain in Chapter 3. In my counselling practice I routinely ask the people I am working with if our conversation is producing anything new or valuable. So I ask, as Mykhalovsky does, of the reader of this thesis if anything of value is experienced or discovered. That will be the measure of its usefulness.

Some of my resistance to autoethnography, the researching and writing of my own story(ies), this 'spinning of memories' (Gannon, 2003), might also be that it appears to counter the very values that I write about. Perhaps the roots of this discomfort are as described in Gannon when discussing Foucault's move from the "care of the self" to "know thyself". She writes:

... Foucault marks a turn in the technologies of the self, from the classical interdiction to care for the self towards a different responsibility to "know thyself." The turn comes at a point in the transition to Christianity where concern with oneself is "denounced as a form of self-love, a form of selfishness or self-interest in contradiction with the interest to be shown to others or the self-sacrifice required (1997)". (2003, p. 285)

These Christian ideals of concern for one's self being seen as selfish, or self focussed, were represented in my family and community as humility and a strong focus on the other over self, on the collective; family and community over the individual. I was able to find even more comfort, though, in this research of stories of the self, reading further when Muncey goes on to write:

Sparkes (2002) traces the universal charge of self-indulgence in vulnerable writing back to a 'deep mistrust of the worth of the self'. He suggests that autoethnographies can encourage '*acts of witnessing, empathy and connection that extend beyond the self or the author and contribute to sociological understanding and ways that among others are self knowing, self-respectful, self sacrificing and self-luminous*'. (2010, p.93)

As Muncey writes, I

... can again see a way forward where writing of the self also has the focus on the other, the reader, the cultural stories being challenged and revised. Perhaps then this act of writing can have a congruence with the values it researches. I, like Bochner, have hopes for writing to make some difference. (2010, p. 93)

I find it liberating to conceive of an autoethnography having a congruence to the values it researches, values which also underpin my counselling practice. The idea of cultural stories being challenged and revised is also an important part of narrative practice, where dominant cultural stories are deconstructed, in the possibility of recapturing counter stories that can easily be lost in the power the dominant cultural ones have.

An example is the huge resurgence in recent years of attendance at Anzac dawn ceremonies. Counter stories of resistance and protest to war have been invisible in mainstream media, yet I always think of the many Quakers and others who were treated harshly by their communities and imprisoned for their pacifist stand. It was this counter movement that took my father to India, the story of which will be told later. I am reminded as I write, though, that my father did walk on Anzac day, but he described himself as walking for peace. I wish now I could ask him (he died in 1982) whether he was taking up a both/and position; of honouring those who had died in the war, including some of his close relatives, and holding a pacifist stance. In contrast my mother paid no attention to Anzac day and certainly would never wear a poppy, telling us it 'glorified war'.

Ellis quotes Bochner's deep care that his stories improve social conditions "one at a time and encouraging voice person by person, as well as through an explicit focus on social justice or connection with an interest group, ideology, or party politics.... (Bochner, 2002)" (Ellis, 2009, p.15). I further see how autoethnography has a congruence with the values of social justice and care it explores in the telling of stories that have these at their centre. Similarly to Bochner writing of the "one at a time and voice by voice", post structural therapist Kaethe Weingarten describes her work: "...big ideas can be knit, small stitch by small stitch, into the fabric of the work. Trumpets needn't blare. The stuff of daily life, the small and ordinary, can be fertile ground for the most sophisticated concept" (Weingarten, 1998, p. 7).

Tierney also writes of the contribution autoethnography might make.

Life histories are helpful, not merely because they add to the mix of what already exists, but because of their ability to refashion identities. Rather than a conservative goal based on nostalgia for a paradise lost, or a liberal one of enabling more people to take their places at humanity's table, a goal of life history work in a post modern age is to break the stranglehold of metanarratives that establishes rules of truth, legitimacy, and identity. The work of life history becomes the investigation of the mediating aspects of culture, the interrogation of its grammar, and the decentring of its norms. (Tierney, 1997, p.546)

Many of the stories I tell here are situated in a desire from the family and community I grew up in to 'mediate culture', and 'decentre its norms'; to challenge and resist many dominant ideas of the time, from World War II, through the 1950s onwards in New Zealand. The mediation of culture and decentring of norms is also an essential part in narrative work where practices of deconstruction are used to mediate cultural norms and expectations that might be unhelpful and integral to the problems clients are experiencing (White, 2002). Practices of deconstruction will be explained further in Chapter Four.

I acknowledge that the experiences I write of are as I remember them, and as I imagine the effects they had. I do not write 'truth'. Another member of my family may well bring different stories forward. In conversations with my siblings as I began this writing project much seemed to be shared, but my siblings would offer different emphases, I am sure, that would therefore bring forward different meanings.

The life story utilises specific moments in a speakers life that are conveyed through a story; *less attention is paid to textual veracity than to what the implicit semiotic meanings of the text may be*. Ruth Behar (1996) has written that 'the genres of life history and life story are emerging with the testimonio, which speaks to the role of witnessing in our time as a key form of approaching and transforming reality.' (Tierney, 200, p.547, italics mine)

The process of remembering may change too; I am aware that what comes forward as important now may not have five years ago, or may not in the future. As Muncey writes, “Self is a process, not a structure. The process of becoming is always in motion. Any evocation of an experience is always incomplete and in transition, and at best can only be described as a snapshot” (2010, p. 23).

The stories that follow in Chapter Two illustrate some of the influences towards social-and-cultural-justice in the motion of my becoming; snapshots of what was ‘in the water’ surrounding me as I grew up, that continues its performance in my current life and work.

Chapter Two: The adventure travel of stories in autoethnography

This chapter begins the autoethnographic stories that explore the roots of social justice, care and equity that surrounded me from my birth.

These stories could start at many places; for instance with my English mother, whose family were Quakers for many generations. Quakers began as a resistance movement to the established churches in the 17th century. It was a time of much upheaval in England, culminating in civil war between parliament and the king. The Catholic and Protestant churches were battling for power, each in and out of favour with the monarchy. There were many dissenting groups, including Quakers.

This sect had been founded during the 1640s by a weaver's son, George Fox, ... They called themselves ..'Friends of the Truth' or simply 'Friends'. But after a judge mocked this group as 'Quakers who tremble at the word of the Lord', this label was proudly adopted. In contrast to their later reputation, the early Quakers were seen as dangerous and subversive. (Wood, 2010, p.325)

Earlier Wood had written that Wycliffe described the established church as

huge centres of privilege, which were now irredeemably corrupt. He asserted that at the local level the widespread corruption of the priesthood invalidated the office, their actions and even the sacrament itself... he said the institution and its priests should be as poor as they were in the days of the apostles. (2010, p.205)

This was also how early Quakerism was explained to me as I grew up; as developed in reaction to the wealth and corruption of the established churches.

In a publication, *Quaker Faith and Practice*, written by a committee that included my mother Phyl, and “offered as a source of inspiration, information and understanding of Quaker thought and practice in Aotearoa New Zealand” (2003, p.i), Quakerism is described in this way:

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), Te Hahi Tuhauwiri, does not formulate creeds, doctrines or dogma; rather Quakers try to live the revelation that something of the divine, ‘that of God’ is within every person... Inspired by this, George Fox founded a movement that didn’t rely on priests, preachers, liturgy, physical sacraments or sacred buildings. Ever since, Quakers have sought to listen, individually and in group worship, for the inner voice of God to lead them in new lives and a different form of worship. (2003, p.i)

More of how Quakerism was lived and was one of the main influences of my growing will follow. I turn at this point to my father, to set the scene that I entered, in Allahabad, India, in 1953. Versions of this story were told to us, my siblings Michael, Murray and Annabel and me, and to others in our hearing, as I grew up. I now realise I, too, tell these stories to others, in situating myself when asked about my background. This story explains how my parents met and how it came about that my three siblings and I were born in India.

My father, Joe, was raised on a farm in the Taranaki, although he had more interest in his mother's large garden than in the farm. He chose to go to work at Duncan and Davies, a local nursery, to grow plants, rather than follow a future in farming, and was apprenticed there at 15 years old. When he was in his early twenties, in about 1932, momentarily for the time and his family context, he left New Zealand to train as a horticulturist at Kew Gardens in England. While he was at Kew, he took up an opportunity he was offered of an exchange to the botanical Gardens in Berlin. This was just before the Second World War, and “there weren't many offers to go”, he would say.

When he was in Berlin he learned German and his teacher was a Quaker. This was his first encounter with the Society of Friends. A second significant influence occurred when he was taken by his teacher to a Hitler meeting with Gestapo everywhere. Joe was horrified, and became politicised about war and the plight of the Jewish people. He was given books to read by this Quaker teacher; books by writers and activists such as Gandhi¹ and Tagore and by these readings Joe was convinced to become a pacifist and to follow this new deep interest in Quakers.

When he left Berlin, only a month before war was declared by Britain, Joe's journey became terrifying. He carried a large amount of luggage for Jews who were fleeing Germany. When he got to England and his bags were opened and womens' clothes were found, he had to admit whose luggage he carried. Fortunately he was allowed through, back into England. This perhaps is the earliest story I know of a significant act of resistance and justice by my father.

Throughout my earlier life, when identifying as a pacifist, my siblings and I, and I imagine many Quakers, were challenged about Hitler and how war was necessary as the only way to stop him.

Despite my father's experiences in Germany, he and my mother, who was in England at the time, held the strong conviction that the previous war,

¹ Gandhi was an Indian nationalist who opposed British rule of India. Britain had taken control of India in 1857. "The disparity between what these two nations gained from the relationship is obvious: once India had its functioning infrastructure, there was no more need for the imperial power. For Britain, how ever, it was no end in sight to the need for money, a market and an imperial Army"... "The long-standing lesson of the 1857 mutiny was that violence would not succeed in expelling the British, who would always be militarily stronger" (Adams, 2011, p.24, 25). Gandhi developed non-violent resistance by way of non-co-operation with the British: "This was going to be a great struggle, he said, with a very powerful adversary. If you want to take it up, you must be prepared to lose everything, and you must subject yourself to the strictest non-violence and discipline..." (Adams, 2011, p.162).

World War One, created World War Two, since the sanctions imposed on Germany created a climate for a leader such as Hitler. They also spoke of believing that there were many non violent means to use first, and diplomacy had not been utilised effectively.

On his return from Germany, Joe joined Quakers in England where he met my mother, whose family had been Quakers in England for generations. With his new conviction as a pacifist and interest in the work of Gandhi, with Phyl also having an interest in service overseas, Joe decided to go on Quaker service to India. Had he stayed in England, he would have been a conscientious objector and probably jailed.

Joe's work in India was to advise on agriculture, so that Indian farmers could generate more produce from their land as there was so much desperate poverty. While in a sense this was missionary work, Quakers had become aware that traditional missionaries were inextricably linked with colonialism. They had thus moved away from religion being at the centre, to active engagement in aid work. I suspect, however, my parents would say that aid work was centering their religion. Quakers did not proselytise, but would answer questions about their faith if asked. This movement away from traditional missionary work was a strong part of my mother's history, as she was born in China in 1921 to Quaker missionaries. She told us of a frightening journey, fleeing in a junk down the Yantze when there was a rebellion against foreigners. My grandparents later became convinced that missionary work needed to change to respect the culture of the country they were in.

My mother, Phyl, joined Joe in India arriving on one of the first passenger boats towards the end of the war, in what sounded to have been a dangerous journey avoiding the many mines that were still at sea having been sewn during the war.

During their time in India Joe and Phyl stayed on both Gandhi's and Tagore's ashrams, taking up the cause of Indian independence from British rule by non violent resistance. As part of this stand they wore home

spun or khadi sari and kurta so as not to identify with the Colonial British in India, those who were against independence. This was a doubly political move to stand in contrast to the colonial project and for Gandhi and independence as hand spun clothing was both materially and symbolically significant. Gandhi promoted hand spinning

... as not only economically desirable but as spiritually necessary. He began to devote an hour a day to spinning on a wheel, and the ashram residents had to overcome technical difficulties in order to spin and then weave their own cloth. Soon they were all dressed in rough white khadi. It was to become a symbol throughout India of the nation's call for independence and self-reliance. (Adams, 2011, p.167)

My parents' connection to India's independence and Gandhi's cause became the second of the early stories of justice and resistance.

My mother was strongly situated within Quaker life and history, her family having been Quakers for generations. In 1662 her direct ancestor Charles Lloyd was convinced to become a Quaker and imprisoned for his beliefs. In a book written about the Lloyds, Anna Thomas wrote of the Lloyd brothers being imprisoned:

Quakers used no carnal weapons, they stirred up no discontent or rebellion against the powers that were, but they quite simply and in pleasant spirit went on their way, breaking the laws and accepting the consequences of so doing, whenever the human law came in the way of obedience to the higher law of God. (1924, p. 182)

Phyl told us of the persecution of Quakers and the various roles men and women held over time. "In keeping with Quaker traditions, tracts often included challenges to political authorities, who were indicted for not attending to the needs of the poor and oppressed" (Garman et al., 1996, p.3). For instance the well known Elizabeth Fry in the early 1800s worked with prisoners, and to make prisons more humane. She gave women

convicts who were being taken on ships to Botany Bay a 'bag of useful things', which contained items and fabric for sewing.

I was the youngest of four and we were all born in India, coming to New Zealand when I was six months old. We then became part of the Quaker community in the different parts of New Zealand where we lived. We would attend Quaker Meeting every Sunday, where children would sit for the first 20 minutes and then go to children's meeting. Here, we were read stories of early Quakers. These stories and others similar were also told by my mother as our bedtime stories. They show the intentions of influencing children differently from the predominant culture of the time; giving alternatives to fighting, aggression and war and also generating respect for others, particularly in terms of emancipation of those oppressed by their race or colour.

I'm sitting on what feels a tall chair, watching the clock, its big black hand moving so slowly. I wriggle in my seat and swing my legs, then huff a big sigh. My mother places a gentle hand on my knee with a small smile of understanding and I try to settle into quiet as the people all around me are settled. At last the hand on the big silent clock gets to 11.15 and movement starts in various parts of the room as Ruby Dowsett, tall and white haired, gathers her bag and stands. We follow her out to the children's room where she greets us all warmly. She takes a book from the shelf beside us and introduces the story for the day.

When I began this writing, I went to the Quaker Meeting House to see if these children's books were still in the library and found them there, instantly recognising their covers. I will quote some of the stories from two of them that were told by Quakers who took the children's class, and by my mother.

A number of stories, which I remember well, reflected a different stance to colonisation where the English in what became the United States of America took land for large numbers of settlers without respect for the lives of the indigenous people. I did not understand this stance at the time

of being told these stories and it wasn't languaged in political terms. One of these stories was set in the United States of America in 1682, the time of English settlement. The story was of William Penn, in Elizabeth Howard's book, "A Book of Brave Quakers". Penn's father was an Admiral who loaned money to King Charles II. The debt was paid back to him with land in America which had been 'conquered' from the 'Indians'. William Penn went to claim the land. I now include part of the story Howard wrote:

But William felt that, after all, the land belonged to the Indians, and he had no right to take it by force and fight them with guns while they had only bows and arrows. He made up his mind to buy it from the Indians and make them his friends, not his enemies. So he called them to meet him, and offered them presents and money, and they signed a treaty or agreement, and promised not to fight one another. And, do you know, for seventy years no Indian ever attacked a white man, though they were a very fierce and cruel tribe, and there were far more of them than of the white men. The English settlers were able to build houses and plant gardens and fields, and get married and even start towns. One large town was called Philadelphia, which means the town of brotherly love. Don't you think it is a nice name? And the name of the country was Pennsylvania, after Admiral Penn.

But now comes the rather sad part of the story. All this lasted only seventy years, as long as Penn and his family had anything to do with the place. After that it came into the hands of other people who were not Quakers who felt they must have swords and guns to fight the Indians. The Indians found this out, and though for seventy years no white men and no Indian had ever killed each other, after that they no longer trusted each other, and many terrible things happened.... (1957, p.17)

The threads of cultural justice, pacifism and a respect for others are very apparent, as they are in another story, versions of which I was told many times, from the same period also in the United States of America. This

story supported both pacifism and respect for indigenous Native Americans, though of course in the language of its time. I was told versions of this story many times. I realise now that these stories were told in the context of British imperialism, which Quakers were a part of!

The story, as I remember it, was called 'White Feather'.

Some Quaker settlers in a village heard that there had been an attack by the Indians near them and other villagers went house-to-house warning people to arm themselves and be ready for an attack. When the time came close for the Indians to come the Quaker families left their houses with their doors unlocked, did not arm themselves and went to the Quaker meeting house. They sat in silence for some time and then a child whispered to his father, who looked meaningfully around the room. They continued to sit in silence as it became apparent what the boy had seen. Indians in war paint with feathers in their hair encircled the meeting house and were visible through the windows. The Quakers continued to sit in silence, though some of the children were very frightened. Then the doors opened and the Indians filed into the room. They talked excitedly gesticulating to each other and still the Quakers sat. Then an amazing thing happened as the leader of the group beckoned to the others and they sat on the floor in the meeting house with the Quakers. When the Quakers left the meeting house they found that many of the houses in the village were left burning, but their own unlocked houses were unharmed and each had a white feather above the front doorway.

We were also told many stories of the underground railway in America, about the children of Quaker families helping their parents hide slaves running north to freedom from the Southern States. One of these stories was called Hannah's Bonnet, written by Marguerite De Angeli in 1940. Perhaps I remember this well because it was about a little Quaker girl, who didn't like the bonnet she was made to wear!

Hannah was sent, wearing a hated plain Quaker Bonnet, to take some food to a friend or relative and as she walked along the path was called out to by, in the language of the time, a Negro woman, asking for help as she had a sick child and had no water or food. She spoke scarcely above a whisper. "We were on our way to the North where this child's Daddy is free! But my boy took sick. I tried to make him better but I didn't have any way to take care of him...." Hannah opened her basket and took out the loaf cake. "Take this", she said, "and I'll go and tell mother. I promise thee I won't be long."

Hannah took her father back to find the woman and child, and the family looked after them.

The woman and the boy were both too weak and sick to go on their way for a few days, so mother and Hannah took care of them. Hannah went up and down stairs many times a day to take food and water to the sick woman. Mother bathed her and made her comfortable.

One night father came home with the news that he had arranged a passage for her with the captain of a boat, who was a Friend. She and the boy were to be taken after nightfall to the wharf, where the boat was being loaded with goods for Boston. The woman's husband was working there in a shipyard.

It all had to be done with the greatest secrecy, for those who helped escaping slaves were hated even by some people who didn't keep them. If the woman was found by anyone searching for escaping slaves, she would be punished and sent back to her owner or perhaps killed...

The woman was so grateful she could hardly speak, and tears filled her eyes as she took Father's and Mother's hands. Then she turned to Hannah. "Little girl," she said "it's you who helped me first. I knew I could trust you. I knew you were a Friend because of your Quaker bonnet." Hannah's fingers reached out to touch her bonnet. Now it

felt light and beautiful. It was something to be proud of just as it was... She looked up at mother with the 'inner light' shining through her eyes.

"Thee dear Hannah!" said Mother. (Brinton et al., 1964, p.107-108)

These stories evidence one of the main values with which I was raised. This value is described well on the back cover of one of the collections of children's stories "Candles in the Dark" that the previous story is in. It is a quote from Faith and Practice, Philadelphia Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, which says; "Every individual of every race and nation, is of supreme worth;... love is the highest law of life, and... evil is overcome, not by further evil, but by good" (1964, back cover).

A few days ago, I was transported to another childhood memory of learning through experience, in respect of another culture.

It is Bob, my partner's, birthday and about 20 close friends and family are drinking wine laughing and celebrating Bob. I am in the kitchen putting out food and Bob puts on a new CD, a birthday gift he has just been given. It is a group called the Yoots playing old time 'singalong' waiata. I hum along to the first track and their next waiata begins and suddenly I'm singing the words.

I can feel the smooth wood under my thighs, worn by years of performances; it is an old school. We are singing as our wooden sticks click and pass, laughing when one of us drops one. I am loving it and proud that I learned the words fast and can sing the waiata; a sense of accomplishment too that I rarely drop the sticks, while I can hear the sticks dropping all over the place from others on the stage. The girl opposite me has a beautiful rhythm and ease of movement that I try to emulate as I learn. She laughs at and with me. She is Maori, perhaps a little older than me, and clearly finds this stick game a beginning one and very easy.

I am at Summer Gathering where around 100 Quakers from all over Aotearoa meet for 10 days of connection. There are organised cohesive

large group activities with Meeting for Worship and a discussion in the morning then activities such as tramps, swims, or picnics in the afternoon. These are then followed by games, music and folk dancing each night. This year, some time in the 1960s, Summer Gathering is at the Quaker boarding school in Whanganui. Our family is camping with other families in tents on the school fields, others stay in the dormitories. The local Quakers of Whanganui had negotiated our summer gathering to be centred around making connection with the local iwi, for a sharing of cultures; Maori and Quaker. What stands out to me now is that this was an exchange; we were not tourists, we were two cultures learning about each other.

I remember, too, sitting as an audience below the stage at the front with the other children and the old, though vigorous, Maori man strides up and down the stage walking with his carved or stick and waving it to punctuate his words. He speaks first in Maori and then translates for us. Then some women stand behind him and sing in beautiful harmony.

I learn, as well, a haka from this iwi, many of the words of which are still with me, though I have never heard it since

U ta - i! 'Ta-hi! U ta - i! 'Ta-hi!

Utaina mai nga iwi O te motu

Ki runga Whanganui e tau nei

A hiki nuku e! A hiki rangi e! ... A hah ha!

In researching this haka now I learned that it was written in 1958 by the Reverend Kingi Ihaka. Its meaning is that:

The visiting group, or manuhiri, are likened collectively to the crew of a canoe. When the manuhiri reach their destination (the guest tribe's marae) the canoe is said to have figuratively arrived at its resting place. (folksong.org.nz/utaina_mai/index.html)

I always wondered about how it was for Quakers to learn the haka with its associations with war and conflict - which seemed a real respect and openness to connection with a different culture. In reading the English words now I am also taken to thinking how sensitive the iwi were, to choose a haka with such a meaning.

This Summer Gathering took place in the 1960s, a time I know now when Maori were being hit by teachers for speaking their language at school. The political context was that of attempting to assimilate Maori into white culture, by intentional acts such as in government housing 'pepper potting' Maori families amongst Pakeha rather than together, in a deliberate attempt to separate them from their community and culture.

In 1949, from a total of over 30,000 statehouses allocated nationwide, Maori received only 100. Government believed Maori could not afford the houses and that the inferior living standards would have a detrimental effect on the area in surrounding Pakeha residents. However, after pressure from the Department of Maori affairs... Government agreed to allocate a certain number of houses to Maori in 1949. When it did so, it adopted a policy of 'pepper potting' - dispersing Maori families amongst Pakeha - to avoid large concentrations of Maori in one area, and to encourage them to live as Pakeha. (Carlyon & Morrow, 2103, p.36)

These policies were never discussed at the time, as I remember it. I suspect many Quakers, my parents included, had a naivety about this wider context. It has only been the last 30 years or so that Quakers have taken on Treaty training, and action towards a more equitable partnership with Maori.

The belief that every individual is of supreme worth extended beyond cultural or racial differences. A strong basis of the stories read to us as children was about absolute honesty and truthfulness, and a deep care for others from a base of equality. Howard's stories, written in 1957, are told by way of an aunt answering questions from her niece and nephew. One

of the questions Jenifer asks is “And why do women as well as men speak or pray in meeting?” Her aunt Deborah answers “We Friends think that God makes no difference between men and women, and if a woman feels she has a message to give, she must give it...” (1957, p.8-9).

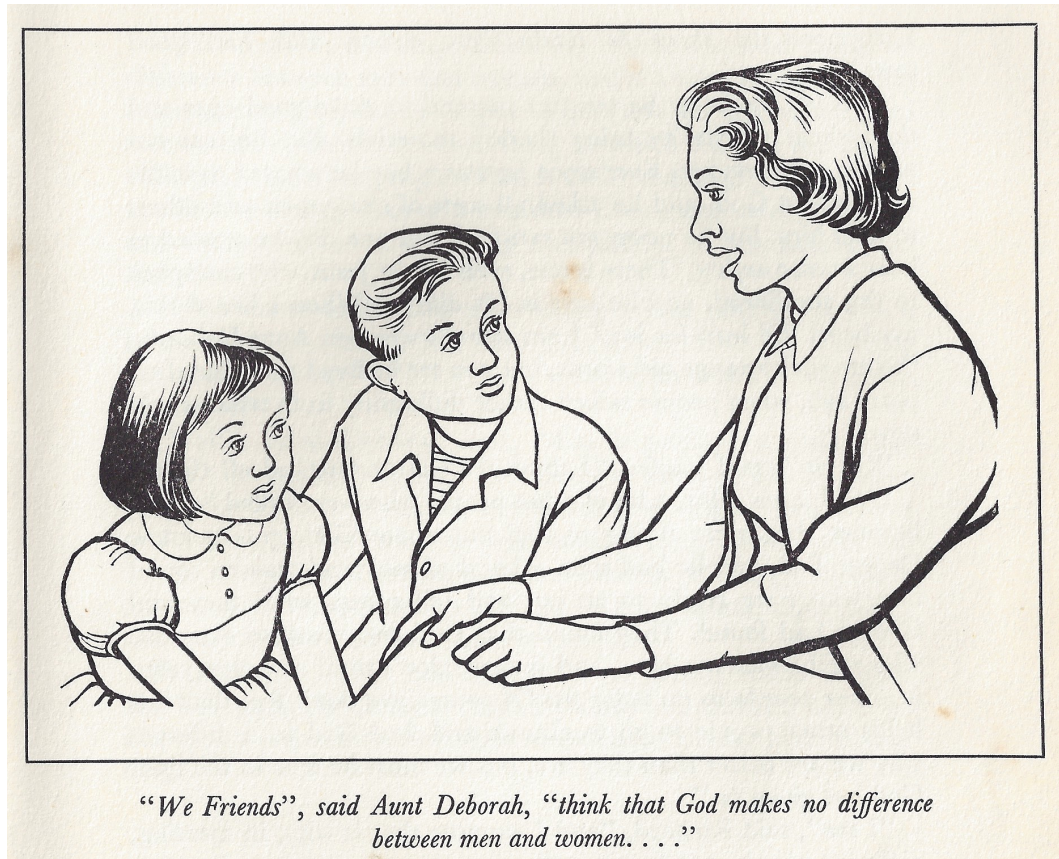


Figure 1. Allen, Renee (1957). From *Brave Quakers* (p.7) by Elizabeth Howard, 1957, London: Bannisdale Press

It's Saturday morning and my mother goes to the turntable putting on Beethoven's Pastorale symphony ...

I weep as I recall this memory as I see my mother now sitting in a room, hers but not hers, in the rest home where she now lives. I put on a CD of Beethoven and she smiles in pleasure, waving her arms part childlike now but still with some of the conductor to her. It is almost too much, the resonance of the music and the sense of loss. Phyl was a musician; cellist, pianist, and she played and taught the recorder. We grew up playing

music together as a family, each of us taking up different instruments. Cixious talks of writing as also turning towards and opening to the other in this context, “for Cixious writing is an intense practice of love, an ethical attentive practice deeply rooted in the body, in the unconscious, in respect for the self and the other, in life itself “ (Gannon, 2003, p.18). This thesis-writing experience of connection with my childhood becomes ‘an intense practice of love’, inextricably connecting me to my mother, and opening the way for such sorrow, as Alzheimer’s has her ‘here’ but ‘not here’ in so many many ways. The writing of these stories, and experiences as I write also turns and opens me towards the reader, and I feel a deep connection in Gannon’s words to respect of self and the other, in life itself’.

To return to this story of my childhood: *The music plays, creating a happy connected atmosphere as all four of us, my two brothers, my sister and I, with our mother, do the weekly cleaning of the house. I am in the toilet, scrubbing and whinging about the smell of the cleaner, hoping no doubt to be relieved of this particular job. Mum is a whirl of activity, going to chat and help us with whatever area we are working on. We have jobs that rotate now and again and no distinction is made as to gender, only capability from age. When we are finished I enjoy the tidy house and go and phone my friend as I am now free to play. The cleaning happens only once a week as housework is not much of a priority for my mother, which makes a very different house than that of my friends. I am ambivalent about this, partly proud that my mother works as a teacher of children with special needs, partly accepting of her different priorities, partly proud I was born in India, so my house is full of Indian artefacts, but also partly wishing my house was more conventional – for instance always tidy with baking in the tins. I would also challenge my Dad at times about how come he didn’t join the clean, but his excuse was always the garden. Each of us, brothers included, but not our dad, also had cooking nights where we usually cooked for at least eight, as it always called for comment if it was just the family at our dining table.*

Within Quakers too, the organisation works with positions of responsibility and influence rotating and seamless across gender. There is no minister, with the belief that god (or 'truth' or 'the light') speaks through anyone not just a chosen few, so both women and men speak in meeting for worship. This has been so since early Quakers in the 17th Century, with women preaching and travelling to preach and being imprisoned for their beliefs alongside Quaker men.

This equity between men and women was so taken for granted, with committees and sub committees being based on Individual Quaker's knowledge or interest and/or a sense of contribution, that I have never heard any discussion about a balance of gender or gender equity within this Quaker context. Alongside this of course, while Quaker organisation was based on equality across gender, we were not immune to the influence of gender training from the wider culture.

It is the mid-1970s and I am living back at home for a time. My mother has been away on the weekend at a Council of Women conference and the next weekend she and my dad are about to go out in the car. Dad as usual gets the keys and goes to the driver's side of the car. This time Phyl doesn't get into the passenger seat but walks around the car saying "I'll drive; if I can drive all over the South Island, including gravel roads for my work I can drive here." Dad looks nonplussed at first and then with a wry perhaps slightly shamefaced look handed her the keys and goes round to the passenger door. After this they always asked each other who would drive. My dad had early feminist books on his bookshelf, books by authors such as Simone de Beauvoir, but these readings had not necessarily translated into equity in his home life. He was raised on a farm, and while he was always different from his father and brothers, with more interest in their large garden than in farm work, it was a Scots Presbyterian farming family where gender roles were clearly defined. Men drove and didn't do housework.

I also had a much earlier experience that showed that Quakers were not immune from reproducing oppressive practices within gender power

relations. What my background enabled me to do, perhaps, was to have the knowledge and confidence to take steps to choose the safety I was able to. Therefore, unlike many girls and women who couldn't do this for a variety of reasons, such as being threatened or unable to get away, I didn't become a victim of someone else's actions.

In my early teens I loved going to stay at a Quaker family's house where the children were good friends and I also loved their parents. While our family was hardly conventional within 1950s New Zealand this family was very unconventional, relaxed and different. They had a less formal way of life with things for dinner like macaroni cheese with buttery crackers on top, eaten in melamine bowls, (not considered a proper dinner or way to eat dinner in my house!), were strongly intellectual and countercultural. I learnt to play bridge, staying up late at night, alongside joining my friends in the usual childhood pursuits of ranging around the beach near where they lived. Their father in particular was very warm and physically affectionate and when I would stay overnight he would hop into bed with his daughters and then with me in the morning. This felt loving and inclusive and I loved his interest in me as we chatted. One morning though, he began to touch me sexually, in parts of my body never touched before, and what had been loving became wildly confusing and emotionally so very painful. I went rigid, clenching my legs which he commented on, seemingly accepting the wordless 'no' and going back to hugging me in the way that had been warmth before. But my trust had gone, leaving nervousness and tension. I tried to avoid staying for a while, asking my friend to come to my house but in the end went back, not being able to explain my reluctance. This time, though, he grew more insistent, whispering to me about sexual parts of my body and what they were for. I lay there thinking of his wife whom I loved dearly, in an agony of a sense of betrayal. I also thought of my friend in her bed a few feet away; did he do this to her?

When I went home from this last time I ever stayed overnight, I thought and thought about what to do. I thought about his wife, his children my

friends and the effect of telling on them. I thought about my parents and the terrible pain and conflict they would feel. I thought about our Quaker community; how would a fracture of this nature affect everybody? For all these reasons I never told anyone until I became a counsellor, 20 years later, despite having no doubt at all I would be believed, would not be blamed, and would be loved and supported. Unlike so many girls and women I was fortunate in being able to choose safety, to not be around this, what I know now was sexual abuse. I was able to leave before I was harmed, though keenly felt the loss of the closeness with my friends and his wife. Perhaps it was helpful, too, that I always knew it was his responsibility; they were his actions and they weren't okay. Perhaps my background of justice allowed me to recognise this experience in the light of injustice.

This memory coming forward as I relate to gender equity in my background leans more towards Lather's (2000, cited in Gannon, 2003) 'jarring moment', the 'scandalous and leaky' (p.286) and it certainly was, yet it is the only experience I remember of being treated with less than care and respect, both values surrounding me as I grew up.

Another area of justice was our family's involvement in Nuclear Disarmament and anti Vietnam war protests during the 1960s.

The country's first anti-nuclear group, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament formed in 1959 and based on the British model, was left-leaning, earnest and tiny. In the early 1960s, however, the antinuclear movement rapidly expanded in response to France's proclaimed intention to test nuclear weapons and the role at all in French Polynesia... (Carlyon & Morrow, 2013, p.173)

Dad went ahead early in the morning and is at the back of the March loading packs on to trucks. (It wasn't until I was older my mother told me that while he wanted to support the protest and believed in its cause he couldn't bring himself to actually march in a protest. It was too big a stretch for him from his background.)

My mother, sister and I are standing in the middle of the road amongst lots of people. My stomach is a bit churned up in anticipation; how far is the walk? Will it be okay? There is somehow a heightened feeling all around me. I move closer to my mother and sister, my little placard saying "Ban the Bomb" at my feet. Then there is a ground swell of movement and we gather up our placards in readiness to walk behind the large colourful banner held on one end by my brother. It says 'Quakers for Peace'. In the march further away, people are talking and chanting, but the group of Quakers we are part of walk in silence. My mother tells me in a low voice as we walk that we walk in silence like a vigil to show our seriousness and how important stopping the war is.

As I write this story another memory surfaces. During this time an American, somehow different from our usual visitors from both overseas and New Zealand, came to stay. There was a kind of suspended feeling at home; not the usual warm and open welcome for him and while it was unspoken I felt a kind of dis-encouragement to draw close to him. I couldn't understand what was happening and why this visitor was different. When I asked my mum, somewhat crossly, "why aren't you nice to him?" there was a bit of a silence as she found it hard to explain. She said something like he was a soldier who didn't want to fight any more. This didn't explain anything to me and I was left a bit confused and edgy. It wasn't until years later that I learned he had deserted from the army and my parents were very conflicted about how to respond to him. While they applauded his rethinking his involvement in the war, it didn't fit with Quaker principles to desert. From the very beginning of the Society of Friends, Quakers would stand up for their beliefs, speaking out and taking the consequences, including imprisonment. I suspect my parents didn't quite have a framework for responding to this young man.

In all these stories of my growing up, the central shaping belief instilled in me was that there is 'that of god in everyone'. My mother would also invariably add "or that of goodness or love" as she, as many Quakers, did not have a view of god as personalised, and there was always an

openness to different meanings or understandings of god. Once I left home and began my own journey in a different city from my parents, this belief of what I would name as 'that of goodness or love' continued to influence much of the actions in my life. Which begins Chapter Three, where I tell the stories of justice being lived in the next phase of my life, and also an encountering the wider culture, from which my experience of injustice led me to new understandings. These also influenced me as a therapist. Included in this chapter is the story of my first introduction to counselling.

Chapter Three: Continuing travel with signposts to counselling

Once I left home in the mid 1970s my partner, young son and I lived with a number of other adults and children in a large house in central Auckland. We were part of a couple of movements at the time; hippies, and the human potential movement.

As hippies we were valuing pacifism, co-operative living, simplicity, whole foods and self-sufficiency.

Tim Shadbolt... emphasised the idealism of those times: 'the commune was not just a rejection of orthodox society. We genuinely believe we could create a whole new world. We would reverse the history of evolution, the agricultural revolution, the Industrial Revolution, and all the wars and famines of the world simply by staying at home and growing organic vegetables.'" (Carlyon & Morrow, 2013, p.159)

The connection to the human potential movement brought personal growth and a deeper connection to each other, with values such as honesty, self awareness and responsibility. My commitment to these social movements also later led to being instrumental in two others; the home birth movement, and later HUG (heterosexual unafraid of gays,) which a friend and I started in support of the Homosexual Law Reform Bill.

My involvement in home birth began when I was 21 and pregnant with my first child, and had recently moved to Auckland at my partner's request. Our family doctor in Wellington had referred me to Professor Denis Bonham at National Women's Hospital, telling me that he had the reputation as the best obstetrician in Auckland.

We sat in the waiting room for a long time, possibly an hour or more, for our first appointment. Finally we were ushered in to see a balding man with glasses who examined me and talked about due dates and wanted me to have a scan to verify this. I remember it was a struggle to find the courage and space to ask the questions I had prepared, let alone new questions about the scan, which was then a relatively new practice. As I remember it my questions were answered very speedily, almost abruptly as though unimportant, and then I asked "And can Alan be present for the birth?" Denis Bonham replied that it might be possible but that he would be the judge of that and he wouldn't promise it. I, nervously by now, persisted; "what would decide whether he could stay or not?" he replied with a huph; "I will judge it at the time" and made it very clear that the consultation was finished.

We left and I was furious at his attitude, and knew I would never go back. During our appointment a nurse had knocked and needed to get something from the examinations bed area. Denis Bonham was scathingly rude to her which made me squirm for her and at some level I knew that the same treatment had to be possible for me if I took him on as my specialist.

I recognised his power, but did not have a language at this stage of my life to describe the positioning of the almost singularly male medical specialists as omnipotent, all powerful in their realm of the hospital.

In our 'hippie' circles there were murmurings of the possibility of home birth, and I began to look into this as an option and met Joan Donley one of only two home birth midwives working in Auckland. She gave me articles to read about the medicalisation of childbirth, and the safety of home versus hospital, including statistics. I was convinced to have my baby at home, but then the trouble started! I was suddenly facing pressure from what seemed every direction and this choice was seen as irresponsible and unwise.

In the end I agreed to a compromise of a small private hospital which supported natural child birth, with a new doctor who would do the delivery. It was not a good experience though, as the minute the going got tough I was given drugs. Despite the consternation by the medical professionals, some family and friends I left hospital early. I left though into Joan Donley's care and I will never forget the incredible gentleness of her care of both me and my new baby, with breast feeding, that had been a struggle in the hospital setting immediately being sorted in the lovely calm atmosphere of home.

For my next baby two years later I was determined to have the baby at home and Joan, the midwife, asked if I would consider having my birth televised, to show home birth as a real alternative. I agreed as I knew from my own experience that people were still frightened of home birth, and many others didn't know the choice existed.

During this time my brother, a doctor in general practice, gave me 'Our Bodies Ourselves', in which he had written "Dearest Jan, this book is to make up for the lack of communication from most doctors about most things, much love, Michael." He was recognising the position of doctors and wanting to practice differently himself.

The book was a revelation, and supported the ideas and experiences that I was grappling with and suddenly here were a community of women writing about these issues. "We had all experienced similar feelings of frustration and anger toward specific doctors and the medical maze in general, and initially we wanted to do something about those doctors who were condescending, paternalistic, judgemental and non-informative" (The Boston Women's Health Collective, 1973, p.1). I was also beginning to understand the politics of childbirth being in the hands of a largely male medical profession and the effects of this on women's view of themselves, let alone on their individual labours. I didn't language this as feminism.. yet..

...we are denied control over our own very personal childbirth experience. Childbirth, which could be as much a part of our everyday lives as pregnancy and childcare is removed to an unfamiliar place for sick people. There we are separated at a crucial time from family and friends... In the hospital we are depersonalised; usually our clothes and personal effects, down to glasses and hairpins are taken away. We lose our identity. We are expected to be passive and acquiescent and to make not trouble.(passivity is considered a sign of maturity). We are expected to depend not on ourselves but on doctors... (Boston Women's Health Book Collective, 1973, p.157)

I also read Gaskin's "Spiritual Midwifery"(1977) which were all stories of home births with women central to the process and the mother in labour the most central of all. They educated me in the normality of labour and birth in a range of positions that suited the labour, rather than lying on a bed for the doctor, and potentially being put in stirrups, which was still common practice.

The stories were also of the importance of gentleness and connection, of women's voices of their own experiences and what they found supportive.

Judith: ... I felt telepathic with all mothers before me and knew that we were one thing, all come to that same consciousness. I felt like I learned what trying is and what it is to put out all the energy you've got... It made me feel strong and healthy and like I had a new place to work from.

...I felt blessed to be home and with folks I loved and trusted (Gaskin, 1977, p.195).

These stories helped me to be calm and positive for my next birth, which was a beautiful experience at home with the midwife Joan, Alan, and a couple of friends, let alone the whole television crew who all ended up in tears and described witnessing my birthing in this context as life changing.

I see now just how political an act having my birth on television was.² While I was part of a hippie community where there was much more openness about our bodies and nakedness, this certainly not apply to the general population! My father was beside himself and could hardly bear to watch, but never questioned my decision.

These experiences both connected me to women as a collective that recognised our knowledges and capacities and rights over our bodies. They were also the early connections to experiencing and witnessing the different position of women in the general culture; different to the equity within the Quaker context in which I was raised.

Our 'hippie' or alternative lifestyle was also connected to the human potential movement started in the United States by Carl Rogers, Abraham Maslow and Fritz Perls among others.

The news these apostles of human freedom carried was welcomed. They spoke, individually and collectively, of the potential for becoming something different and better.

They talked of expressing feelings and of developing openness. The unity of the whole person, mind, body, and spirit was stressed. Many welcomed the knowledge that they did not, and should not have to, take responsibility for another human being. Each person must assume responsibility for him or herself. (Donnelly, 1981, p. 6-7)

Felix Donnelly went on to write about the increase, in the 1970s, of one to one counselling and then how this began to take second place to group

² *I was very taken a few years ago when at the birth of my granddaughter the main hospital now had delivery suites with spa baths, labouring mothers were encouraged to walk around, families were welcomed and partners expected. I felt a great sense of pride that my, and many other women's protest, forced the mainstream medical model to change.*

therapy. The one to one counselling was client centred with its origins in the work of Carl Rogers.

This has a basic premise that an individual can change his or her behaviour by changing perceptions through an open relationship with the counsellor... The job, therefore, of the counsellor is not to give advice, but to help the individual to reflect on perceived changes that are possible within his or her own life. (Donnelly, 1981, p.11)

The establishment by the counsellor of a relationship that is warm, accepting, and empathic is also important (Donnelly, 1981). I didn't know it then, but humanism was informing our thinking and the counselling training to follow. As St. Pierre describes, I saw these ideas as truth, and the way to do counselling:

...the language, practice, and effects of humanism have been operating for centuries, and envelop us every moment, and have become 'natural'. Humanism is the air we breathe, the language we speak, the shape of the homes we live in, the relations we are able to have with others, the politics we practice, the map that locates us on the earth, the futures we can imagine, the limits of our pleasures. Humanism is everywhere, overwhelming in its totality: and, since it is so 'natural', it is difficult to watch it work. (2000, p.478)

At this time, the late 1970s, I joined Youthline, which Felix Donnelly had started as a telephone counselling service. My partner Alan was already a member. The training for Youthline was largely based on group therapy lines, with the emphasis being on personal development in order to help others. While I joined with the intention to be helpful to youth needing assistance I found that, as Terry Locke wrote, "Youthline had been rather vague in pinpointing the specific needs it has pretended to be responsive to. At times, it has appeared more oriented to the needs of its own counsellors than to the needs of the callers themselves" (1981, p.221-

222). It did this orientation well, and for me created a close community among the Youthline counsellors, some of whom have stayed life long friends. As well, as Donnelly writes;

Through misunderstandings in some instances, and real understandings in others, group therapy became suspect among some of the professionals who were seeking referral outlets for people in need. What began as a healthy enough emphasis on personal growth and self-love, sometimes lead to an unbalanced self preoccupation and selfishness of the wrong kind... (1981, p.6)

A few men, including Alan, very early began to take up leadership positions, and while some lovely work was done in the groups, there were also intense, including sexual, relationships built with women in the groups, showing both a lack of understanding of boundaries, and of the power male leaders held by virtue of their gender and position as leaders. This was not uncommon practice at the time, with other counsellors, mostly men, but couples working together as well, forming intense, sometimes sexual relationships, in addition to, and outside of the counselling room.

My background had me positioned to recognise some of this as abuse of power though once again I didn't have the language or full understanding to speak into it well. Bob, whom I repartnered with many years after this, recounts one of his earliest memories of me. He would tell this as part of the story of our getting together, despite this event being long before we did. Bob was also in Youthline at this time and in his recounting describes how Bert Potter was a guest speaker at a Youthline evening, addressing a large group about his intention to begin a community. Bob describes this woman, long dress and hair, standing at the back. Bob says with great drama "and she was asking challenging questions of *Bert Potter*!! And not just once...!" I remember the disquiet I felt listening to Bert Potter, and what seemed a lack of collective process – he was very much the leader,

with others around him acting as though he was a guru.³ I remember being very nervous but determined to speak, but only asking about the process of decision making, and whether this was an equal process. It is sobering to still be working in my counselling practice, 30 years later, with people trying to deal with the effects of living in the community Potter formed.

While there was no analysis of gender, power or its effects, I did learn much about myself personally from the group experiences in Youthline, much of it positive which was very helpful as I grappled with life as a young mother in a relationship filled with conflict.

I was fighting for contribution and equity from a place of expectation given my Quaker background, described earlier. Alan had no experience of relationships of equity having been raised in a very traditional family where his mother did the work in the home, and his father worked very long hours as an accountant.

Interestingly Alan described his mother's deep unhappiness and use of valium, but the connections with her role and position as a woman and mother were not made. During this time it was a revelation to me, as for many women in the late 1970's, to read Marilyn French's (1977) 'The Women's Room', which fuelled our rage and increased our commitments for equality. I saw my own experience as a wife and mother reflected in the main female character Mira.

I also saw this mirrored in the lives of many friends. I had, prior to this, seen my experience as an individual relationship issue rather than one of gender inequity, and feminism provided a new understanding and the collective support to work for change in my life.

³ Bert Potter went on to create Centrepoin, initially a therapeutic community with him as a leader, where abuse of children and young people became common practice by him and others. He, and some other men from the community, were tried in the criminal court and subsequently imprisoned for this in the 1990s.

I had no framework for separation of a marriage, despite being desperately unhappy. I couldn't conceive of a family life for my boys without two parents together. While devastating at the time it was fortunate that Alan made the decision to more openly pursue the freedom to have other relationships. In 1977 we separated and I became a single parent on a benefit, another learning curve that also gave me a further understanding of both gender and class that I had previously been blind to.

My background of strength and equity, though not strong enough to motivate me to leave the relationship, did stop me internalising the prejudices I encountered as a single parent on a benefit. I resisted and spoke out against these, for instance writing to the then Minister of Welfare when treated disrespectfully by some of the practices of the Department of Social Welfare. It made a significant change to how I was treated, and I hoped did for other women as well, as this was part of my motivation to protest.

I had by this time become a leader of groups in Youthline but I became concerned at my lack of knowledge and understanding of how to respond adequately to the personal struggles that people in the groups revealed. I decided that, rather than pursuing teaching for which I had trained, I wanted to become a counsellor. With the Domestic Purposes Benefit then just enough to support me I went to university to study psychology.

I also took up a part time job as a social work assistant in a social service agency, the Leslie Centre, and was then asked to apply for a job there. It was the kind of work I was studying towards, so was surprised and delighted when offered the job. It was explained to me that they wanted my training as a teacher, who I was, and my life experience more than the study in psychology, in fact would I consider leaving or postponing the study as they would train me in a different way of thinking.

It was the most wonderful sense of 'coming home' to have found counselling work in a place of shared values, respect and care for others. I

was so fortunate to be trained by David Epston (one of the originators of narrative therapy, more of which will be described) and Fred Seymour, a psychologist with deep respect for the families and communities he worked with, who opened my eyes to the power of preventative work, such as groups that educated parents, the influence of which will also be described later.

The difference in modality that caused the agency to request I postpone my study of psychology was their working with families from a systems family therapy model. This was in contrast to most of the therapeutic work of the time being individual. While broadening to working with families, which was a major shift at the time, the humanist principles, as in my training in Youthline of Carl Roger's client centred approach, were not initially challenged. While another therapist and I brought a strong feminist analysis, this had not translated at this stage into the practice in a coherent way.

Some of the main influences in the systems models were structural and strategic family therapy (see Barker, 1986). Structural family therapy involved seeing the family as a system that should work in some predictable ways to be functional. The structure of the family was seen as important, with clear boundaries between parents and children. The therapist developed interventions to assist the family in, for instance, taking up this hierarchy, especially in how they managed their children. "We were all people who felt comfortable with the idea, in fact who were certain that it was our role, to enter into a field of family relations and produce change" (Minuchin, 2001, p.13).

Family systems were likened to cybernetics, a metaphor from machinery:

The original cybernetic model, sometimes referred to as the first Cybernetics or first-order Cybernetics, grew out of communication engineering and computer science and offered a coherent explanation of how systems of all kinds are regulated...

The cybernetic model was useful for family therapists as a way to conceptualise how families (as systems) maintain their organisation. This was a technical paradigm, and families were assumed to follow a discernible and disruptible pattern of self correction which the therapist, as an outside observer, could adjust through skilful and informed intervention. (Mills & Sprenkle, 1995, p.2)

Strategic therapy developed interventions that were paradoxical with the family not usually being told of the real intention of the intervention. For instance, a family that came with a particular problem would be told not to change (Minuchin, 1995).

The strategic purist brings specific beliefs about family problems into therapy, and intervenes accordingly, with or without the family's conscious cooperation in the process... There has been a surge of negative opinion regarding the strategic work with families, mostly in protest against the implicit power, control and even manipulateness associated with this approach. The post-modern argument is that strategic therapy is largely built on fixed ideas about optimum family organisation and health, and that covert therapeutic tactics built on such assumptions are an imposition of the therapist's reality on families whose ways of being are inherently unique and deserving of more respect. (Mills & Sprenkle, 1995, p.7-8)

Without a language yet to describe why, I was never comfortable with strategic work, recognising the power and lack of transparency, which did not fit with my values. I was able however to critique it from a feminist perspective in that this work kept the status quo of power in heterosexual relationships largely resting with men/fathers.

We were also influenced by the Milan model (see Barker, 1986), with its principles of hypothesising, circularity and neutrality. As they did, we worked often in teams and would meet to hypothesise what the problem

might be, having received the referral. “The Milan group replaced the therapist with the team, and instead of interpretations, questions were used as the basis of therapy” (Minuchin, 2001, p.13). Our initial questions were informed by the Milan group’s circular questions which involved us, for instance, in asking one person to reflect on another’s behaviour. We may ask “John, what does Martin do when..” Or “Marian, who is closer to Mum, Greta or Simon..”

These ways of working were very effective, with families making changes in their lives and relationships that fixed or alleviated the problems they came with. It was the unintended effects, and the position of the therapists that needed examining. Our work was beginning to change, with our so-called neutrality, and external position to the families we worked with coming into question. This change is explained further in Chapter Four with the beginnings of narrative therapy and the influence of poststructural thinking and practice developed.

“Life stories are created and recreated in the moments of their telling,” suggested Holman Jones (2005, p.775). In the reflection and knowledge-creating arising as I write these accounts, I notice how much the stories with which I was raised, and the actions taken in them, shaped my responses as I encountered life after leaving home. This shaping was further enhanced by the actions of justice that I witnessed in the lives of my parents and Quaker community.

As I pause at this point in the chapter, the girl with the Quaker bonnet comes forward. She showed by wearing her bonnet that she was a safe haven for a runaway slave. This story becomes resonant with my parents wearing khadi homespun in their endeavor to show they represented difference than the colonial British in their support for Indian self-determination. And then there is further resonance as I witness myself, in hippie clothes, trying to find the words to speak for values of equity. Across each of these moments clothes can be read as a text that is alive in an enactment of social justice. While each of these enactments occurs

in different times and contexts, with different freedoms to speak and act, the threads of justice are woven throughout.

The influences storied in this chapter as well as including some actions towards justice, also showed a new understanding of inequity from my own experiences as a young woman. These laid the pathway for a deeper understanding and connection to poststructural ideas, primarily through (a very beginning) feminist lens. Chapter Four explains the movements in practice that brought social and cultural justice more central to my learning to be a counsellor, from the foundation of the values of my background, the experiences on leaving home, and the training in Family therapy.

Chapter Four: An exploration of practices of justice in counselling

As Lynn Hoffman wrote, “We may have gone too far in trying to “change” behaviour, “restructure” a family, or “intervene in a system. What if a problem consists of a “swarm of participations” like a cloud of gnats? What if we decide that our task is to influence that cloud but we have to do so from the position of one of the gnats!” (1998, p.105).

At the Leslie Centre our work in family therapy began to change, with a greater recognition of our role and power as therapists in our work with families. This continued with the burgeoning collaboration of David Epston and Michael White⁴, a collaboration I had opportunity to witness and participate in as David began to organise workshops with our team and Michael, when he visited to work with David. Their collaboration turned out to be narrative therapy in its inception but was not yet theorised. As David said when at a workshop “... I've requested that the participants explain my work to me.... After all, I didn't represent any stream that I knew about – I thought perhaps that I could find some neat comprehensive all – embracing body of theory” (Epston, 1989, p.113).

Karl Tomm wrote of these developments in the foreword to the seminal ‘Narrative Means to Therapeutic Ends’:

Breaking new ground in any field is a major accomplishment. To do so in different directions at the same time and, in so doing, to open up whole new territories reflect a *tour de force*. In my opinion,

⁴ David Epston was a senior practitioner and trainer at the Leslie Centre. He is internationally renowned and much published. He subsequently founded The Family Therapy Centre. Michael White founded the Dulwich Centre in Adelaide, Australia. In this chapter I refer to Michael and David when I discuss my experience of their practice. I refer to them as White and Epston when referencing their publications.

Michael White and David Epston, are engaged in just this kind of trailblazing for the field of family therapy.... It [his book]charts a series of bold strides in their reconnaissance into the domain of human problems and stakes out some original therapeutic contributions. (White & Epston, 1990, p.vii).

While I write the theory here, it was very different to be training and practising with David Epston at the time. The influences of the development of his and Michael White's work were just a part of the questions we considered in supervision in the development of my family therapy practice. I was aware though of a sense of 'fit'; that these shifts in practice better wove together my own thinking and values. They fitted too with the unease I had with the available family therapy models, as I was also living in a different kind of family than the nuclear family that structural family therapy was predicated on, and this led me to challenge some of these ideas in the agency. It was becoming clear to me too, that these ideas were based on ethnocentric thinking as they didn't allow for the extended families that other cultures lived in, and the different roles these produced. What was making it possible for me to work at this time was the care of my children by my mother, who had retired following the death of my father. We bought a house together, with her having a separate flat within it. While I was living this way myself, professionally it was considered 'over involvement', and a lack of appropriate boundaries by a grand parent if they attended family therapy with a parent or parents, or had an opinion about issues with children. "How do these ideas this fit?" I asked in the agency, "with a family such as mine, where my mother is more involved than my children's father?" I would question other ideas too, for instance that children were being 'parentified' if they were closer to a parent, or had responsibility in their families. I explained that in single parent families and families from other cultures, children having more responsibility was commonplace and could be very functional rather than dysfunctional. Of course it was possible for children to be positioned inappropriately, but I was challenging the margins as different from what

was considered 'normal' at the time. Other feminist therapists, such as Johnella Bird (1993), and I, were also mounting a critique that structural family therapy did not have an analysis of the role of women and power in the heterosexual couple relationship and often in the life of the family.

David Epston was delighted with reflection on ideas and practice, perhaps particularly when embodied in personal experience. He was always open to different ideas and incorporated them into his practice. He was, and is, an extraordinary practitioner and thinker, and these were wonderfully exciting and stimulating times in therapy.

These were early days for me as a therapist, though, and mostly just gaining the practice, working with many families primarily with Fred Seymour's, the director of the agency, and David's guidance. The work was changing for me though, through conversations and changes in practice, rather than through theory being explained. David's thinking, with his collaboration with Michael White, was the impetus for these changes.

In regard to family therapy – which has been our area of special interest – the interpretive method, rather than proposing that some underlying structure or dysfunction in the family determines the behaviour and interactions of family members, would propose that it is the meaning that members attribute to events that determines their behaviour. Thus, for some considerable time. I have been interested in how persons organise their lives around specific meanings and how, in so doing, they inadvertently contribute to the 'survival' of, as well as the 'career' of, the problem. (White & Epston, 1990, p.3)

This shift towards therapists understanding the meanings clients were making, rather than looking for functional structures and behaviours within their families, with the therapist in a more expert position to judge them, inevitably set other changes in motion. It changed the position of the therapist to a more collaborative one, moving towards what became practice where the client is the expert in their own lives and experiences.

Supporting these changes were theorists that David and Michael were studying. Among many, significant of these in the development of what was to become narrative therapy were initially anthropologists: Gregory Bateson (1972), who shaped their interest in the interpretive method described briefly in the previous quote and Edward Bruner (1986), from whom came the

use of narrative as a metaphor for interpreting experience, instead of 'map or 'pattern', because narrative could handle the dimension of time which is key in explaining life cycle changes and developmental processes. Jerome Bruner added that narrative requires a perspective or voice and a landscape (a *context*) in which action takes place. (Gosling & Zangari, 1996, p. 50-51)

Then there was Michel Foucault, the French philosopher and historian, whose influence was very shaping of Michael and David's moves in thinking and practice, that then led to the articulation of the ideas of narrative therapy.

... Michel Foucault's work informed White and Epston that knowledge and power are inseparable in that *power* is the ability to elevate certain information (*constructed knowledge*) to 'truth status'. Those who have the ability to name and define the experience of others are able to condemn or subjugate certain persons' experience. Therapists, for example, can label people with psychiatric diagnosis. (Gosling & Zangari, 1996, p.51)

Michael White writes of these cultural 'truths' as "... a power that recruits people's active participation in the fashioning of their own lives, their relationships and their identities, according to the constructed norms of culture..." (White, 2002, p.36).

Through deconstruction Derrida, another French philosopher, provided a way to expose and make visible the 'constructed knowledge' that become 'truths'.

Deconstruction is a critical practice that aims to 'dismantle [*deconstruire*] the metaphysical and rhetorical structures which are at work, not in order to reject or discard them, but to re-inscribe them in another way' (Derrida, quoted in Spivak, 1974, p.ixxv). Thus, deconstructionism is not about tearing down but about rebuilding; it is not about pointing out an error but about looking at how a structure has been constructed, what holds it together, and what it produces. It is not a destructive, negative, or nihilistic practice, but an affirmative one.... The deconstructive method is the point of departure for many of the poststructural analyses that have critiqued the knowledge claims of humanism. (St. Pierre, 2000, p. 482)

So from a move to enquiry about client's meaning making rather than the decision of therapist from their 'expert knowledge' also came the illumination of what cultural 'truths' or discourses, might be held, that inadvertently were in support of an issue or problem story.

As I was being influenced by David and Michael in the detail of my practice in supervision and training, I was learning the changed practices that they were shaping from these new ideas. At this stage externalising the problem became a practice that Michael and then David developed to assist in addressing in counselling the constructed norms of culture.

'Normalising judgement' is a mechanism of social control that incites people to measure their own and each other's actions and thoughts against the norms about life and development that are constructed within the professional disciplines.

...In this objectification of identity, many of the problems that people encounter in life come to represent the 'truth' of their identity. For example, in the context of the professional disciplines, it is not uncommon for therapists to refer to a person as 'disordered' or 'dysfunctional', and in wider culture it is not uncommon for people to

consider themselves or others 'incompetent' or 'inadequate' by nature. (White 2007, p.25-26)

Michael White developed the practice of externalising as a way of separating people's identities from the issues they were facing – the problem is the problem, not the person is the problem (White, 2007). The person can then be supported in objectifying the problem rather than themselves being objectified as the problem and "When the problem becomes an entity that is separate from the person, and when people are not tied to restricting 'truths' about their identity and negative 'certainties' about the lives, new options for taking action to address the predicaments of the lives become available" (White, 2007, p.25-26).

This theoretical link was not yet coherently put together, but I learned to use externalising conversations in my practice, and experienced the radical shift this made in people's experience of not only the problems they were facing but of therapy itself. It moved them into having knowledge to bring to the issues they were facing, made possible because they were not the problem. It moved me as the therapist even further into collaboration with them, not only in working to understand the meanings they were making, embedded in stories, but in assisting them in finding the knowledges they had that could be brought to counter or address the problems they were encountering.

Along with externalising practices came the focus on what Michael White called unique outcome, which built on Bruner's idea of meaning through stories. "... within Bruner's work was the idea that because narratives do not encompass the full richness of our lives, there are numerous lived experiences that are not storied" (Monk & Gehart, 2003, p.20). Unique outcomes involved noticing or searching for those stories that are not taken over by the problem, that could then have the potential to be pathways to preferred identities and lives, that then address the problem or have it less influential.

It is clear in terms of an awareness of justice why I have remained committed to a therapy where it is seen that:

People describe and live their lives through stories constructed under the umbrella of culture that dictates what kinds of stories or knowledge are 'correct' and acceptable. Furthermore, people judge themselves against the standards of those stories that have been deemed 'correct' and preferred. *Oppression*, then, can be described as the domination of certain stories over others, and the purpose of therapy is to support individual *agency* in uncovering and living stories that are congruent and satisfying. (Gosling & Zangari, 1996, p.51)

Where my background of justice showed during this period was initially in the agency setting, rather than the therapy itself. Amongst other connections, family and friends, there was a growing awareness of the position of Maori in Aotearoa, with Treaty of Waitangi Workshops being run and being talked about amongst us. But we were all Pakeha working at Leslie Centre and there was little or no discussion of cross cultural work when Maori families came as clients. I raised this as an issue to immediate agreement and then organised two Treaty Workshops to raise our awareness. At the time these workshops were pretty confronting of our position as white colonisers, and we felt and learned. At the same time Charles Waldegrave, Kiwi Tamasese and Wairihi Campbell, were with colleagues developing the Family Centre in Wellington, and their work and presentations at conferences further raised our awareness.

...successful approaches in therapy are often presented as being somehow international and intercultural. Psychological knowledge is, by implication, considered simply sufficient in itself to address the problems of people, regardless of culture and background. Our work in a New Zealand agency, with staff and clients from three cultures – Maori, Samoan, and European(white) – strongly suggests this is a false conclusion. (Waldegrave et al., 2003, p.17)

At the Leslie Centre we began to explore what cultural justice in the light of the Treaty would mean for our agency. Maori practitioners at the time made a call for Pakeha to stop working with their people, who they believed needed their own cultural context. Work needed to be done though, as they requested, in training Maori as counsellors, to combine counselling practice with their cultural knowledge, so that there were enough workers to service their community. I have remained committed to this vision, with greater understanding after the years working with tangata whenua colleagues and families, of the importance of Maori working with their own people, wherever possible. I discuss this further later in this chapter.

In time a Maori Advisor was employed by Presbyterian Support, who ran Leslie Centre. Paraire Huata took up the position and came to work with us. He and I saw Maori or mixed partnership families together and I learned so much from him about what might be required of me to work respectfully. This enduringly changed my practice, an example of which I describe later in this chapter.

And now to describing the main influences in my current thinking and practice, based in narrative therapy. As these authors, Gosling and Zangari write “We have found that the two frameworks of narrative and feminist family therapy elegantly join together, as if the notches had been carefully cut and fitted by design. The narrative approach easily accommodates an understanding of the influence of patriarchy while the feminist perspective is rooted in the concept of the storied life which has been obscured by dominant knowledges “ (1996, p.48).

For me, also, it was a coming together of my counselling practice with the values of my background and concern for social and cultural justice including inextricably of course feminist thinking and understanding about power and gender, and the development of ways of working that addressed these.

As I write this I am conscious of voices in the background saying: “Who am I to address such a topic? What might I not know? Can I hope to do justice to insider minorities affected by repressive discourses? I might get something wrong, not take my ideas far enough, or ... In response to these voices I want to somehow have my writing as Derrida, *sous rature*, or under erasure. (Derrida, cited in Gannon, 2003). “The tactic of using a concept/ a word/ a thought at the same time as ‘letting go’ of it and marking this by crossing it out in the text – for example, ~~author~~ ... “ (Gannon, 2003, p.21-22). I am so aware of my ideas having been so usefully challenged, and changed over time that I hesitate to take up the position that writing requires, on this, (or many) topics.

This is a fault line for me that has deep chasms with the potential for earthquakes always present. Yet who is critically affected by these fault lines not of their choice? Can they decide to ‘step aside’ because it feels too hard? Who am I a part of, who do I represent, like it or not, that has, and continues to, create the need for those ‘othered’ to inhabit these places? I, as a white, middle class, educated, heterosexual woman, am inexorably part of and thus cannot help but represent the dominant majority in Aotearoa.

So what does this mean for my practice as a family therapist? It is a very small piece in a large landscape, yet it is critically important for me not to replicate the injustice with an ignorance or lack of recognition of otherness and injustice in my work. Perhaps too, gathered together in community, we can be part of the call for change.

I was delighted to read a quote of McNamee and Gergen that seemed to be addressing the complexity of realising these hopes I have for addressing justice in therapy:

There is no means by which a fixed collection of words sewn between inert covers can encompass the issues in all their complexities and travel with vigour and value into practical contexts. Our modest hope is that we can move toward rupturing - even if

slightly - the existing forms of discursive exchange and with these ruptures set in motion new modes of dialogue. (1999, p.3)

Before going to my practice and how I endeavour to bring justice to the centre - and I say endeavour because I am so aware that it is an ongoing challenge to see my own position and thinking when shaped by being a member of a dominant group - I will further explore a strong influence in my, and I suspect many others,' counselling background.

It wasn't until I read Sinclair and Monks' (2005) article 'Discursive Empathy: A New Foundation for Therapeutic Practice' that I re-connected with the early influences in my training to be a counsellor, as written about earlier, the traces of which still 'hang around', catching me unawares at times. This is not all bad, but to be treated with caution! The liberal humanist perspective of Carl Rogers was useful in its teaching a client-centred approach, taken further by what Michael White would call being decentred (White, 1997). I also learned the importance of being present, and really listening. I value, too, some aspects of the 'heart' of the work in what it means to be and that which connects us as human, and here's the BUT put really well in Sinclair and Monk's words;

While there is an emphasis on the separateness of the individual in liberal-humanism, there is also an emphasis on a universal nature of what it is to be human. This notion leads the counsellor to believe that he or she can identify with the client's feelings as if they were his or her own (Corey, 2005). The assumption here is that because we are human, we are capable of sharing universal human experiences. However, this analysis completely dislocates individuals and their problems from the larger cultural context. (2005, p.336)

They go on to quote Buss who could see in 1979 that "A theory that predisposes one to focus more upon individual freedom and development rather than the larger social reality, *works in favour of maintaining that social reality* (2005, p.336, italics mine).

The liberal-humanist perspective in its individualism, does not recognise cultures where the individual is much less important than the collective. Neither does it bring the effects of racism, homophobia, and gender/sexism into the counselling room. It therefore holds people responsible for the effects of these, as their individual difficulty, which then can join therapy in the chorus of oppressive voices and practices of society. This is not to say that counsellors who practice from this approach would have this intention, and as I have often heard, describe themselves as having an 'open heart' and 'open mind, and to be 'neutral' in their stance.

In contrast to this, as Rachel Hare-Mustin wrote in "Discourses in the Mirrored Room: "If the therapist and family are unaware of marginalised discourses, such as those associated with members of a subordinate gender, race, and class groups, those discourses remain outside the mirrored room." (1994,p.22)

Narrative practice brings this political lens into the work and thus into the room. While I say political, it *is* for us that are in the dominant majority, whereas it is *life* for those relegated 'other' by this majority. What is *the practice* that brings this life to the centre? How can practices such as co-researching or co-authoring (see White 2007) for example, address the differing positions from which each, therapist and 'client' collaborate.

I respond to my own questions with an example.⁵ I was asked by a practitioner if I had space for another supervision relationship. I knew through professional connections that Sean was gay, leading me to be worried about what I might not be able to offer in a supervision relationship. I spoke this worry in our first meeting, that I was a heterosexual woman and therefore might not understand some experiences, or ask the right/useful questions as I was likely to have some

⁵ All examples of client and supervision work are fictionalised. That is, they are made up on the basis of my professional experiences, themes and practices over many years.

blind spots. In this conversation I was 'othering' myself, not him as 'other' in the speaking of my identity and its probable limitations. People who have been sidelined into minorities are the ones who are 'othered' and usually required to measure themselves against the 'normal', dominant group. I was raising it as my job to measure *my* work with *my* difference in order to be helpful as a supervisor. I found out later that this was a most significant conversation for Sean, different than any he had encountered professionally or outside his own community. He said he had never before felt acknowledged as *knowing* and someone straight as 'unknowing' about the territories of his lived experience. Positioning myself as *outside* his knowledge made space for him to be *inside*, thus standing radically differently to how he would normally be positioned in terms of dominant culture. The initial conversation I had with Sean also laid a foundation from which the work could take place, as it assisted in creating a context for him to act on letting me know, as I asked him to do, when my 'straight culture' blindness was affecting our conversation in some way.

I am also thoughtful in this practice about the binaries created when I write of othering/self and inside/outside experience. It is a political act to 'trouble', by turning it around, the 'othering' that creates people as less than by virtue of their difference to the norms of the mainstream white, heterosexual, and able bodied.

Benkov (1995) writes about being made 'other' where she describes lesbian families as being researched and measured against heterosexual nuclear families, rather than from what grows children well in any family.

...the studies took up rather than questioned homophobic and heterosexist assumptions. But there were even deeper levels at which these studies troubled me. I don't think family structure is particularly relevant to the issue of optimal human development. I believe instead that children's present and future well-being depends on the quality of the relationships in their world, not on the structure in their families. (1995, p.53)

Benkov later goes on to write; “When one stops looking at them as on the margins, to be compared with the traditional nuclear model, new worlds open up. Lesbian and gay parents have much to teach the culture as a whole...” (p.63)

I have certainly found this in working with lesbian repartnered/step families who have come to see me, as work with repartnered families is an area I have taken a special interest in. (Rodwell, 2002) Once again I would begin counselling by situating myself and my difference, asking if it was okay that I ask lots of questions about their experience so as not to miss things from my heterosexual standpoint. By asking a question such as this I am also letting them know that I carry some awareness of how they might be positioned. I recall working with lesbian and repartnered families, where as we worked together we were all shocked, as through the questions that deconstructed ideas of family, based on a heterosexual nuclear model as the only functional kind, we realised this was what they were impossibly aspiring to. We talked about what shaped the nuclear model in the 1950s, and whether it was working so well for heterosexual couples given the divorce rate. This also lets them know my thinking, that lesbian and gay families sometimes have knowledges heterosexual families could do with. For example rather than an expectation of roles and responsibilities within the family, there is often more negotiation.

Rich conversations ensued as I asked couples about what was different for them, with questions that brought the application of their own knowledge and preferences to creating their own unique families that worked for both parents, partners and children. This, as with all of this work I am describing, is not about technique, it is practice that is congruent with the intentional position I hold and take up, both in relation to the thinking and to the counselling relationship. Positioning theory “enables a study of the detail of how discourse operates in the production of relationships and personal subjective responses. And it also enables counsellors to talk with their clients about the discursive positions they

choose to take up rather than to simply accept those they are offered” (Winslade, 2005, p.355).

This point connects to Sinclair and Monk’s perspective that empathy in counselling has a sociocultural dimension: “A discursive approach to empathy as we describe involves demonstrating sensitivity to the larger cultural backdrop of our lives, as well as the lives of our clients. Therapy from this vantage point affords opportunities to engage with a high degree of reflexivity. That is, both counsellor and client are encouraged to examine and negotiate various cultural assumptions and meanings” (2005, p.334). Us, therapist and couple standing together looking at the sociocultural underpinnings as they were affecting their lives, with my compassionate witness of this, is a way of bringing justice into the work. “To argue against empathy” as Lather (2000a, p.19) says, “is to trouble the possibilities of understanding, as premised on structures that all people share.” (as cited in Davies et al, 2003, p.371)

Then there are the times which can bring both an ease and an unease, when I am also inside the discourses that therapy might usefully address. I am inside as I am the same age and gender and have encountered the same discourse about aging that this client speaks of.

I think of the women I see in my practice grappling with a range of problems produced in the terms of dominant discourses of gender and age for example. Imagine Martina, a heterosexual woman in her late 50s who alongside wanting to talk about resolving some longstanding serious conflict with the youngest of her three daughters, also speaks of wanting to talk about feeling ‘flat’ and ‘grey’, and feeling depressed.

When we got to talking about the flatness I asked her when she began to be aware of it and she said in the last few years but it was worsening. She was feeling increasingly invisible and questioning her value at work, where she has considerable responsibility. As I asked her questions she ran her hand through her hair and said “even my hair is flat and grey – I just feel so unattractive and blah.” I am aware of a rage starting to build,

with my mind suddenly filled with girls and women. Resounding in my ears are the stories of their being objectified by how they are meant to look, in shape, size and what is considered attractive in the 'gaze' of western culture's norms. Foucault referred to Bentham's design of prisons with the effect of the Panopticon, the shape of the prison which allowed for continual surveillance by the guards. This surveillance became internalised, with prisoners, even when guards were not there, minding their behaviour as though they were being watched. Foucault called this the 'gaze', "... the "subjects" were presented as "objects" to the observation of a power that was manifested only by its gaze" (1991, p.199), and it has become a useful term to explain the particular workings of a 'normalising judgement' described earlier. "Like surveillance and with it, normalisation becomes one of the great instruments of power..." (Foucault, 1991, p.196).

The gaze is what we are all induced to offer ourselves as well. I also connect with some of my own experience of aging, of being aware of the 'gaze' for instance being told so many times, how brave I was to let my hair be grey; the implication being that I was mad! I wade through this clamour of voices to be present and with this woman in front of me – I didn't know what this was about yet, maybe this is not relevant and something else is going on for her; slow down; ask the questions.

It became clear though as I asked the source and timing of these feelings that Martina was struggling with aging, and the sense she mattered less, and felt invisible in certain social contexts and stores. To practice with justice is to deconstruct this story, to illuminate what discourses might be at play. While there are many ways we might do this, this time I ask her whether she has ever been on a marae, and looking somewhat mystified she said yes she had, just recently with her university. "Who was at the front, walking onto the marae?" I asked. "The kuia first, doing the karanga," she said, "And then?" I ask. She thought, looking a bit puzzled, and suddenly remembering, smiled, connecting with what I was getting at

– “the older women – actually the kuia asked for those of us with grey hair to go the the front!”

Martina teared up in the realisations she was making as we had a very rich conversation about what our Pakeha culture’s attitudes are to aging. We went on to consider gender: is it the same for men? “Oh no,” Martina replied to this, “they are considered attractive with their greyness called ‘salt and pepper’, or ‘silver foxes’!”

I asked Martina “if you were looking through your own eyes rather than others’ and society’s eyes, what would you be saying about this stage of your life?” She spoke about both wisdoms and a settledness, with fewer demands, and also some challenges as she noticed more tiredness, particularly in her work context.

Following this conversation I asked Martina whether it made a difference to the greyness and sense of invisibility, to see the cultural attitudes influencing it, to which she replied, “ALL the difference! It’s not about me as a person! I want to find ways to be differently this age, and to fight this”. We then talked about her stage of life and what it might offer, with Martina describing having a renewed energy to take up some projects she had been meaning to do, as one of the things she identified was that she had more space, but the flatness had been stopping her using it.

In addition to counselling work, as Paré writes, when justice is central to one’s work, advocacy also inevitably becomes an extension of counselling practice. “Advocacy centres the work of social justice at the mesa (local community) or meta (national, global) levels, in contrast to the micro level of the consulting room...” (2014, p.207). Both the centering of justice, with the awareness from my background, and seeing the effects of oppressive discourses on the people I work with have had me moving into advocacy or protest at times; for instance being part of a group that began an organisation of heterosexuals to support the Homosexual Law Reform Bill to be passed in 1986; joining Hikoi for issues affecting Maori, or housing etc. Apart from acknowledging, and setting in a societal context,

counselling can seem very inadequate as a means of addressing injustice, and advocacy for me helps address this.

Another way of addressing areas where discriminating discourses are affecting families has been to move into prevention work, which seems a combination of both advocacy and counselling. When I was at Leslie Centre, Fred Seymour was instrumental in writing books that were an educational resource for parents (Seymour, 1989). Parents described these as really helpful and the hope was that they were less likely to need counselling around parenting. In my next workplace I began to think about the collective experience of single mothers⁶, in particular when counselling.

Working in social service agencies (also a choice to support those with less means to access assistance), I saw many women parenting on their own, (or largely), and struggling. They saw this as their own individual issue, or a lack of coping, and were often feeling a sense of hopelessness and isolation.

In response I wondered whether the deconstruction of the discourses about single parents in the culture surrounding them could be addressed in a group setting, in the hope to expose the discourses and thus lessen their effect. In initiating bringing the women together I also hoped that the groups could assist in them making connections together as a potential way to be less isolated. I had no idea what a moving, some of them described as life changing, experience these groups would be.

⁶ I use this term to describe the many women doing the majority of parenting on their own. While fathers have become more involved in their children's lives, the day-to-day care is largely still carried out by mothers in the vast majority of families I meet in counselling. There are also very different attitudes for fathers parenting on their own, with them even being seen as 'heroes'. A male colleague who became a single parent, said he was inundated with offers of support, and didn't encounter any of the cultural messages that the women did.

I had underestimated the power of a group of women parenting alone, or predominantly alone, sitting in a room together sharing their stories. This was the first time nearly all of them had sat with others in the same situation, and this was the same in every group we ran.

This in itself was a normalising and deconstructing process that meant they could see so many of their struggles were not their individual 'fault', but the societal context in which they lived, which even now still has them as 'deviant'.

... the narrative approach deconstructs practices of power in people's lives. A woman labelled as a 'single mother' can understand that her status as a single parent does not by itself constitute a problem. Instead, her problem identity is caused by ideologies that dictate two-parent traditional families as 'based' and all other forms as deviant. Deconstruction is a process that illuminates the sources of our beliefs and practices, leaving persons free to choose a story of the own authoring, rather than one that has been prescribed by history, culture and dominant groups. (Gosling & Zangari, 1996, p.54)

In the first session of such a group, after introductions I asked them: "What do you think most people think of when they hear the words 'single' or 'one parent' family? As they started to share the words, they also start to give examples and stories with them and by the end of the exercise there was rarely a dry eye, including my own. A list compiled of what various groups have said, which were all very similar, follows.

- We are dependent on the state and we: don't contribute; can be judged by anyone and everyone
- You are not supposed to enjoy yourself – for instance to go out
- If anything is going wrong it's because I'm a single parent
- We are emotionally hurting our children, particularly boys, because we are single parents

- You're eyeing up husbands – so you can't be friends with couples any more
- It's okay to be single as long as you don't have anything for instance not much in the fridge
- Children from one parent families are 'uncontrolled'
- You are in a no-win – you are deserting your children if you work and creating delinquents, but bludgers if you don't work, and creating delinquents.

The group course then included content that the women asked for, in response to an early question I would ask. Quite often they identified parenting ideas. I would also offer some different research such as about single parents and good outcomes for their children that not one of them had heard of. I also gave them Amato's research (1994) about what the factors were that meant children were more likely to do well, which once again has not made its way into general knowledge. In the last session of six weeks I asked the women to do an exercise to brainstorm *their* truths, rather than Western society's truths of living in one parent families and these are the kinds of ideas that came forward:

- in control of our own life – of self and parenting. Independent.
- fun family times – fun with children
- more balanced focus on children
- women parenting alone are strong, capable, resourceful
- our kids can grow up to be more realistic about relationships, material possessions – more valuing
- it's hard work and financial pressures make it harder
- it's a huge responsibility
- it makes you a strong person, what with dealing with society, and doing it on your own
- it can be simpler, less complex parenting alone
- we are a family – a fully functional family

It was always amazing to me the difference that the women described such a group creating for them. While still finding aspects of single parenting a challenge, particularly their economic situation, the group enabled them to stand in such a different place to meet these challenges. I am also amazed at how little has changed in Western culture's attitudes to one parent families from when I was a single parent 30 years ago. Even worse than then are the punitive benefit rates which increase the pressure considerably.

From this prevention/advocacy work, I now turn to some thinking and practice concerning cultural justice in the particular context of counselling in Aotearoa.

While I find it useful to think of empathy in the discursive way as described earlier in the quote from Sinclair and Monk(2005), what it may not address is the uneven position each person in a counselling conversation holds around the cultural understandings, and how to work with this. "The process of meaning occurs in a social context and is inextricably bound to power relations, with some voices having more weight and social legitimacy than others" (Benkov, 1995, p. 51). It can be thus despite our best intentions as in the area of cultural justice. How do I work in ways that recognise this power and weight when I am part of the dominant majority, especially when it is combined with being the therapist which magnifies this power?

The New Zealand Association of Counsellors' requirements for membership include prospective members knowing some aspects of tikanga Maori. I appreciate the respect this gives to tangata whenua that this is a requirement for membership. I also worry, that there might be an unintended effect where Pakeha might think, and I have had many conversations where this seemed to be the case, that marae noho experience, with some minimal knowledge is enough for cultural safety for tangata whenua who come to see us. Cultural supervision is also a requirement, yet there seems a real dilemma here. How can we –pakeha counsellors- and indeed should we, know how to work in another's

culture? While I see it as critical that pakeha are informed about Maori culture enough to hold respect and to acknowledge difference to work effectively, I am concerned that in consultation there could be an expectation of being given knowledge. Do we have the right to knowledge that comes from generations past and is connected to deep cultural understandings? Do we know enough not to ask what we are not entitled to know? How do we position Maori consultants in the asking? How do we understand when we are not told that it is not for us to be dealing with in our work, due to the politeness and care Maori hold for the partnership? Is there a danger that this not telling is understood as permission?

Might there also be a danger of appropriation; a further 'taking from'? As Linda Tuhiwai Smith so evocatively writes:

Researchers enter communities armed with goodwill in their front pockets and patents in their back pockets, they bring medicine into villages and extract blood for genetic analysis. ... Still others collect the intangibles: the belief systems and ideas about healing, about the universe, about relationships and ways of organising, and the practices and rituals which go alongside such beliefs. (2012, p.25-26)

... Indigenous peoples want to tell our own stories, write our own versions, in our own ways, for our own purposes. It is not simply about giving an oral account or a genealogical naming of the land and the events which raged over it, but a very powerful need to give testimony to and restore a spirit, to bring back into existence a world fragmented and dying. (2012, p.29)

My preference has been to continually acknowledge my Pakeha cultural base and to work from that, always encouraging the people I work with from cultures different to mine to have connection, conversation, or to work with their own people. Skinner in a talk 'Claw of the uncanny: Identity politics in the jewellery of ...'(three N.Z jewellers) said; "In the particular pressures of Aotearoa, the Pakeha practice evokes its other,

gathers force because of this relationship, *while all the time maintaining its own clear identity as a practice*" (2007, p.21, italics mine). This point takes me to thinking of how pakeha relationship with tangata whenua has 'gathered force' in influencing our practice in wonderful ways. I am thinking for instance of tangi and how many of us Pakeha now have our people at home once they have passed away, helping us reconnect with *our* ancestry. Importantly in doing this we also 'maintain our identities' by developing Pakeha rituals to support us through this new process.

While thinking they would likely be better served with their own people I would not want to refuse to see Maori clients, as this to me could support colonialism in taking choice away. I would see my work though, as being likely to have limitations. However does the knowledge of limitation create some level of safety in the work by keeping us in a place of enquiry rather than knowing? "Discursive wisdom is a posture that makes room for **both** the therapist's knowing, a knowingness that may extend to psychological practices and discourses, **and** not-knowing, the acknowledgement of the limits of the knowing, the suspension of knowing which calls forth the voice of the other" (Paré, 1999, p.10).

This therapist knowing and not-knowing that Paré writes about seems to address Pakeha standing in our own cultural and 'professional' knowing, yet un-knowing and "calling forth" the cultural knowledge and experience of those we are working with, as relevant when assisting them to address the issue(s) that brought them to counselling.

Skinner also said "We live in a haunted landscape – by 'we', I mean settlers, the descendants of the colonisers, the ones who, in an age of decolonisation, never went home"... "We struggle to articulate our sense of belonging because we know that deep down our claims are based on a foundation of murder, theft and oppression" (2007, p.1-2). I am acutely aware of my position in working with tangata whenua, as representing the colonisers and it *can* feel a haunting and painful backdrop to the work that so often shows the long term effects of colonisation on people's lives and relationships in the present. I am not clear about how to deal with this

apart from seeing it as part of the edge of the chasm, of the fault line and certainly mine as a Pakeha to find a way to live and work with. This continues to be work in progress for me.

What I do endeavour to do is to find ways to address my 'otherness', in culture in working with Maori, and to show that I hold client's cultural heritage with respect. I also am thinking of possible effects for Maori coming into my Pakeha and professional territory. The relationship I, and we, build, becomes so important in the face of these possible constraints. In the building of relationship I hold Davies' description of agency close. As she writes;

"The authority of maleness" (and here I put myself as a Pakeha therapist) "of people in positions of power needs to be reconceptualised as *authority*, with emphasis on authorship, the capacity to speak/write and be heard, to have voice, to articulate meanings from within the collective discourses and beyond them. This capacity does not stem from the essence of the person in question but from the positions available to them within the discourses through which they take up their being". (1991, p.52)

What is important for me to remember is that this authority exists *without* action or intention of mine, yet is always available. I guess it's like a useful elephant in the room, but mine to keep mindful of! Jones and Jenkins put this well when they write: "I do not argue for a *rejection* of collaboration. Rather, I unpack its difficulties to suggest a less dialogical and more uneasy, unsettled relationship, based on learning (about difference) *from* the Other, rather than learning *about* the Other" (2008, p.471).

I met with Cherry and Ted, a Maori couple, who had been referred to me on a recommendation because of my work with repartnered families. They had combined families, with both bringing children and this was one of the areas they felt was causing them conflict. When asked, they thought it irrelevant that I was Pakeha but thanked me for raising the question. I asked them if they, with me, would hold the possibility that working with a

tangata whenua counsellor might be better or a useful addition, because of what I wouldn't know. I think unconvinced, but polite, they agreed. I began by asking each of them where they were from and their iwi. In these questions I am already letting them know that I am not expecting them to just slot in to a Pakeha way, in which I would be asking; "what do you do?" I asked whether they get back home much and we spent quite a bit of time connecting about our families. I share more of myself, to shift the boundary of separation between 'us and them' that I see is largely Pakeha-informed, and has its place but less here. It seems another way of endeavouring to address how each of us is likely to be positioned in terms of power.

In our work together I never lose sight of their culture, checking in about whether I am understanding and asking if certain things were Pakeha ways of seeing. I ended up working just with Ted as he grappled to come to terms Cherry's desire for a temporary separation. Keeping his culture present had very moving outcomes. I asked at some point where he felt most ... something like strong or connected, and he said "back home". He had not been back for many years and as I asked him questions about home he knew it was his marae he missed, but to stand strong there he needed the language. I named the Pakeha robbing of his language, thereby acknowledging the fault line between us. We talked about what possibilities there were for him to learn te reo, and he knew where it would be best for him to learn. He went on to do this, and in doing so made connections back with his people as he learned. He looked different the last time he came. It was like his spirit had returned.

"If we understand therapy as devoted to the extension of meaning, we would do well to attend to strive for an "our knowing", which both includes and transcends "your knowing" and "my knowing" (Paré, 1999, p. 15). In a way my professional 'knowing' about the effects of loss of identity influenced my practice, thus encouraging Ted to find his place of knowing with his own people. This became so very beautifully 'our knowing' as we said goodbye, each acknowledging the other, with warm hugs, again a

different than usual 'professional' boundary that I would usually keep with Pakeha.

I strive (and it is *strive*, often uncomfortable, and never feeling I'm there!) for a justice in my work that has, in order to *be* just, to acknowledge my membership of a privileged majority that has and continues to cause great injury to the lives of minorities' relegated 'other'. From this acknowledgement I hope to nurture in conversation together an "our knowing".

Conclusion

When I turn back to the initial research questions, I had no idea what a moving journey of discovery they would take me on. Tessa Muncey wrote;

The self, the individual, is a highly reflexive, historically positioned entity, who attempts to engage in meaningful relationships with their culture, their society and other individuals. Like an iceberg, only a fraction of them is visible and autoethnography attempts to increase this visibility to provide a wider range of stories for individuals to connect with. (2010, p.23)

In the writing, I have encountered the iceberg and uncovered parts of its territory that had been beneath the surface before – with me knowing the depths were there, but not having articulated them fully, even to myself. This thesis is also a

...situated story, constructed from my current position, one that is always partial, incomplete, and full of silences, and told at a particular time, for a particular purpose, to a particular audience... That is, re-examining the events we have told about them previously allows us to expand and deepen our understandings of the lives we have lead, the culture in which we have lived, and the work we have done (Ellis, 2009, p.13)

I have been so aware, as I have been writing, of the purpose and potential audience to this thesis. I am also aware of the many silences, of stories and places I have been taken, that are silent here as not relevant to this work.

When exploring the first research question that asked of the history of the centering of justice in my work, I was surprised by the degree to which the influences in the Quaker stories were so intentional. I suspect what made

the stories even more resonant and thus influential, was witnessing the social and cultural justice inherent in them also being embodied in the way my parents and wider Quaker community lived these in their interactions in the world. “Thus, when I perform I am carrying a history of relationships, manifesting them, expressing them. They inhabit my every motion.... we are always addressing someone – either explicitly or implicitly – within some kind of relationship (Gergen, 1999).” (Sparkes, 2002, pp.92- 93)

These relationships that reflected deep care for the effects of discrimination installed in me a belief that the world could and should be changed, by protest and resistance. In Chapter Four I showed how the poststructural therapeutic ideas in narrative therapy supported justice in counselling work. Linking these, the background of protest and the therapy, has also made conscious to me that I have had to ‘trouble’ some of the ideas I was raised with in order to position myself as a collaborator, not a liberator, in counselling relationships. Not doing this could have me practising with what I refer to, in exaggeration to make the point to myself, ‘megaphone’ therapy. (I am referring to the megaphones on marches.) This reminder serves to pull me up to my preference and commitment to a therapy that collaborates (Crocket 2008, p494) in the discovery of where the effects of discrimination or normalising discourses uniquely effect the lives of those I work with, and to co-author *their* preferred stories; to stay beside them, tentatively supporting exploration.

I am aware, though, that the exploration into the practices of justice in my counselling work has perhaps not made explicit something else others are witnessing in my counselling that I bring uniquely, as each of us does in different ways. I have found it surprisingly difficult to pinpoint what this is. Dorothea, Aileen and others have called it a centering of justice and in this a *holding of relationship*. Perhaps because of my background where justice was both storied and lived, my conversations in counselling are shaped by these ways of *being, in relationship*, and are thus taken for granted and hard to make visible to myself. One aspect of this being in

relationship is when I situate *myself*, by letting the people I am working with know my position and thinking, in terms of the discriminatory discourse(s) they are facing by virtue of their colour or sexual orientation. I would suggest that *not* doing so can increase, or at least not address, in the counselling setting as well, this discrimination, and the 'otherness', that goes along with it. Speaking into the discourse(s) myself as a therapist somehow creates a bridge between us, weaving the relationship in ways that acknowledge the difference between us. This then perhaps positions me differently than the white, heterosexual, 'professional' who does not self disclose. I believe there always is the potential, in the light of the experiences of those 'othered', to step into the 'oppressor' in some way. In my awareness of who and what I am and represent, as I belong to that group, I suspect that positioning myself by some disclosure interrupts that representation, of course never fully. My being situated in that group has me never completely 'safe' from inadvertently stepping into blindness at times, as my ways of being and thinking are so shaped by my membership of that group. What it also does I would hope, though, is to show that my intention is not to replicate any cultural discrimination, and by speaking, that I am also open to and up for what may be hard conversations that involve who I represent.

I certainly don't give the people I work with a lecture about my thinking, so how does this positioning get communicated I ask myself? These are the practices of 'othering' myself as outside clients' knowledge and experience of their lives; of acknowledging, by naming where possible and relevant the oppression, as in the example of the Pakeha robbing Maori of their language.

Perhaps most importantly, and I have been discovering this as I think about the holding of relationship, is that there is something here too about a communication of care. I think the people I work with experience that I *care* about them, (which I imagine most clients would experience from their counsellors) but it is a kind of double care, I care about them in the light of the discourse; I care about the injustice. It is kind of a double care

where I am also up for the hard conversations, even when I am implicated by, for instance, my colour and sexual orientation. Perhaps it is even a triple care, where I care, too, that the world becomes a less discriminatory, more just place, albeit in very small conversational moves in counselling conversations, rather than by megaphone!

There is a link here back to my story(ies) told in this autoethnography, which while connecting to justice, also connects to care, and love. Susanne Gannon writes of Cixous. "Cixous' lesson in writing auto(ethno)graphy is that it is ir/rational, embodied, it proceeds elliptically and tentatively, in a fractured style, with the voices of others wound about the voice of the author and with the greatest respect, with love as its imperative" (2003, p. 299-300).

The voices, for me, are of those I work with, who have contributed to my learning in irreplaceable ways, by the sharing of their stories. And then so many other voices are wound around mine, firstly in my childhood, and then the winding round of those I have learned, and continue to learn so much from, in becoming a counsellor. As I began in Chapter One, so here do I need to acknowledge "the names of those who had the conversations in which the ideas for the writing emerged" (Davies, 2000, cited in Gannon, 2003, p.7).

Foremost in these is David Epston whom I have had conversations with for 30 years, firstly in training, then supervision and then as a colleague and friend. Part of the sense in 'coming home' in work with him was his deep connection to justice in life and practice, that assisted me in weaving the values of my background with therapy.

In recent years the voices of my lecturers at Waikato university, in particular Kathie Crocket, have wound around mine in very particular ways. While I was steeped in the practice over 25 years when I began to study with them, I had trouble articulating this work into theory, because of my coming into the work through practice. Their weaving, bringing the colours and textures of many writers and theorists, were threaded with the

very values of justice I write about; their teaching practice supporting me to my find my own voice to my work, alongside extending my ideas and practice from their wisdom and experience.

I finish with two quotes that reflect my hopes in writing;

Tsang emphasises that the importance of the stories she (re)tells are in what they signify and what comes up for the reader. As she explains, "I have no absolute answers; I can only share with you my experiences and hope that they will have some meaning to you, represents something to you, but not necessarily exactly what I experienced. (Sparkes, 2002, p.84)

I wanted readers to feel that in describing my experience I had penetrated their heads and hearts. I hoped they would grapple with the ways they were different and similar to me. (Ellis, 1997 cited in Sparkes, 2002, p.96)

It would seem impossible to center justice in counselling work without the connection of head and heart guiding us. I hope that you, the reader are taken to the stories that enable you to do this.

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