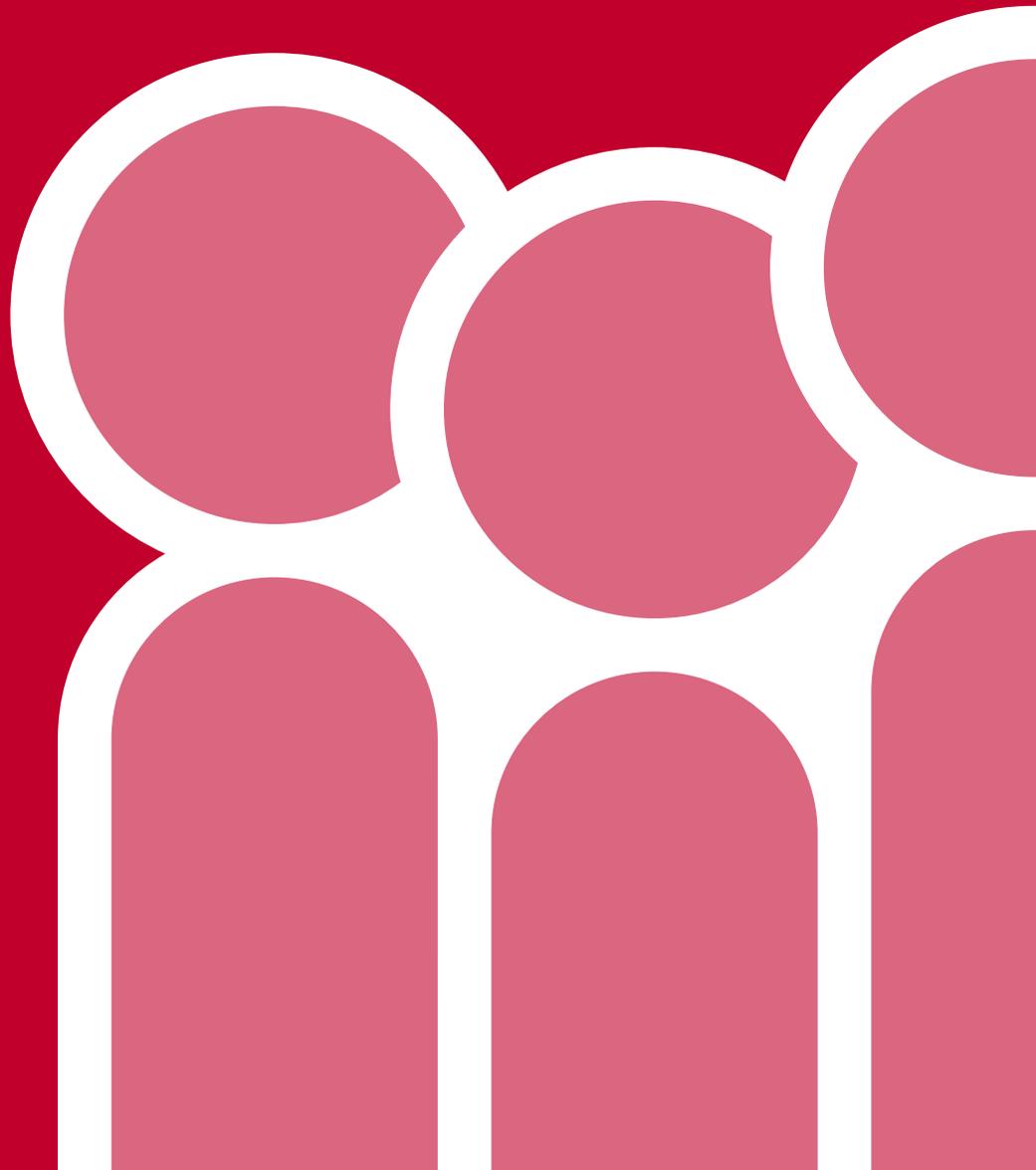


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Integration: The Exploration Continues

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Contents

Maria Gilbert & Katherine Murphy Different Understandings Of The Integrative Project: The Exploration Continues (Editorial)	2	Book Review by Gillian Straker Learning From Our Mistakes: Beyond Dogma in Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy, by Patrick Casement.	76
Jane Speedy Stepping Into Space: The Narrative Metaphor As An Invitation Towards Therapy Integration	4	Book Review by Noreen Tehrani Dignity At Work – Eliminate Bullying And Create A Positive Working Environment, By Pauline Rennie Peyton.	78
Pauline Rennie-Peyton Harassment, Bullying And The Integrative Practitioner	14		
Maggie Senior Dissociation: Concepts And Practice Issues	22		
Werner Prall One Patient, One Therapist, Multiple Perspectives	34		
Harbrinder Dhillon-Stevens Personal and Professional Integration Of Anti-Oppressive Practice And A Multiple Oppression Model	47		
Morit Heitzler My Personal Approach To The Theory And Practice Of Integrative Psychotherapy	63		

Editorial

Different Understandings Of The integrative Project: The Exploration Continues

We welcome our increasing number of readers to this second issue of The British Journal of Psychotherapy Integration. From the informal responses to the first issue of the journal, it is clear to us that many people would welcome an opportunity for an integrative discourse in reference to the ideas presented in this journal. We, therefore, want to experiment with inviting our readers to contribute brief written responses to the articles in the form of letters to the editors. We will publish these as and when space allows, in the next edition if possible. (E-mail letter to maria@fluffy.dircon.co.uk).

Contents of Volume 1, Issue 2

Jane Speedy has offered a very personal account of the narrative metaphor as a basis for psychotherapy integration. Her article is an interesting combination of relevant theoretical concepts which she links to her integrative clinical practice. The vividness of her clinical examples conveys a narrative sense at the heart of her Integrative framework.

Maggie Senior gives us an insight into her own particular understanding of the challenge of working with clients presenting with dissociative symptoms. Maggie provides a good overview of current thinking in the area of dissociative disorders of the self. She weaves together these different theoretical strands which she grounds in an experience-near manner in her clinical vignettes.

Pauline Rennie-Peyton has drawn on the wealth of her experience of working with the victims and the perpetrators of bullying in the workplace. She provides the practising clinician with a way of approaching these dilemmas as they arise in the workplace. She has chosen to focus her discussion on bullying in the workplace, as this is an area in which she has extensive experience, but clearly these are transferable ideas.

Werner Prall has, as promised in Volume 1, Issue 1, provided a clinical case example that exemplifies his approach to integrative practice. He gives a comprehensive analysis of his work with a client over time showing how he uses his integrative understanding to both make sense of the client-psychotherapist experience and to illustrate his choice of response.

Harbrinder Dhillon-Stevens has supplied us with a scholarly account of her own 'multiple oppression model' of anti-oppressive practice. Her paper is firmly based in the relevant literature, her own research, her personal background and her clinical experience. Harbrinder challenges us as practitioners to think about issues that are often uncomfortable or avoided altogether.

In line with our commitment to include a student's written submission for their qualification, we have Morit Heitzler's account of her integrative approach to psychotherapy which has been edited and shortened for the purposes of this publication.

Finally, we include in this issue two book reviews. We intend to continue with this, and invite our readers to send us copies of their own books or those of their colleagues which they believe will be of interest to our readers. (Send copies to The Journal Editors, P.O.Box 2512, Ealing, London W5 2QG).

Maria Gilbert and Katherine Murphy
Consulting editors and co-editors
of volume one.



Jane Speedy

Stepping Into The Space: The Narrative Metaphor As An Invitation Towards Therapy Integration

Abstract

This paper situates narrative therapy practice alongside other 'post-psychological' therapeutic traditions and invites readers to consider the ways in which the narrative metaphor invites them into 'the space between stories' in therapeutic conversations. It offers a brief overview of narrative practice and considers the ways in which certain elements of this approach, such as the position of the therapist as co-researcher, the transparency of consultation processes, the use of re-membering conversations, outsider witness practices and therapeutic documents might sustain the integration of therapy into everyday lives.

Introduction

The stories I want to tell you will light up part of my life and leave the rest in darkness. You don't need to know everything. There is no everything. The stories themselves make the meaning. The continuous narrative of existence is a lie. There is no continuous narrative, there are lit up moments and the rest is dark (Winterson, 2004:134).

I am sitting at the kitchen table constructing myself as a writer, an identity claim that is not entirely privileged in this context. The kitchen windows are casting a pool of light into the fern-fringed darkness of the garden beyond. There is a large dog at my feet and in the next room; door ajar, my twelve-year-old

daughter is watching 'Bend it like Beckham' on a flickering television screen in the half-light of the living room. It is nearly supertime. Under the pretext of spending time 'in the kitchen', I have begun to write this paper. A multitude of alternative identity claims (dog walker, parent, partner and meal provider to name but a few) are tugging away at the edges of my mind's eye and disrupting my focus and sense of purpose. This space will be short lived. This 'lit up' moment will soon retreat back into the darkness. This opening paragraph is being fitted in 'in-between' and will soon unravel between my fingers as other threads of my life encroach and tighten their grip.

This is one of the ways that I may begin to write this piece. I may well come up with others and, indeed, as we speak, there are at least seven moments that I might 'light up', seven perfectly acceptable alternatives, absent but implicit in the current text, scrunched up on the floor. Not to mention the myriad versions that are becoming apparent to you, the readers, as you are re-telling these stories to yourselves within the conversational space that is opening up between us. (I am also forming a picture of you, the critical, questioning readers of this new journal, scanning the pages, looking for places to belong and the spaces to engage in conversation and debate).

Returning to my paper, I imagine your curious, critical questions about this 'storied world' that I inhabit and am attempting to describe. If I could begin anywhere, why not choose

somewhere a little more esoteric than my kitchen table? Is there some purpose? Have these beginnings been constructed by chance associations in the 'mind's eyes' of tellers and audiences? Might they be changed at random at any given moment? How will we know which stories and identities are 'authentic'? Where is all this leading? In what ways has this domestic detail concerning (for example) the writer's kitchen table got anything whatsoever to do with therapy integration?

Perhaps some of these questions can be answered by taking a quick metaphorical scan inside this my mind's eye as the story unfolds. If this story was represented by a thin line travelling across a slice of my 'mind's eye', there might be clear signs of agency, of my making choices about the stories that I prefer from those that are culturally and personally available to me.

I was, for example, drinking a glass of Chianti as I was writing, but I did not mention that, lest it demonstrate a lack of gravitas on my part. I also chose not to include any mention of my partner who was upstairs filling in her tax returns at the time. Does the gender of the partner, I wonder, trouble the original image of the daughter or of the author or re-design the kitchen in the eye of the reader? (Several readers of earlier drafts of this paper, for instance, perceived a fall in house prices and a shift from rural 'Aga saga' to urban Victoriana, in tandem with the onset of the partner's gender).

A great deal of open space is also evident in this quick mind's eye excavation. Space that perhaps sustains many possible ways of linking the traces and fragments and aspects of stories that have not yet been told, may never be told, or are unsayable and unavailable for the telling. It is the liminal or 'threshold' space that particularly interests me as a narrative therapist. This space is the integrative 'substance' of this paper. This is the space that I am inviting us all to step into. It is a space that is very familiar within a more 'literary genre', as Pullman (2003: i) eloquently demonstrates in the frontispiece of 'Lyra's story':

"This... contains a story and several other things. The other things might be connected

with the story, or they might not; they might be connected to stories that haven't appeared yet. It's not easy to tell. It's easy to imagine how they might have turned up though. The world is full of things like that: old post cards, theatre programmes, leaflets about bomb-proofing your cellar, greetings cards, photograph albums, holiday brochures, instruction booklets for machine tools, maps... All these tattered old bits and pieces have a history and a meaning. A group of them together can seem like traces..."

Thus, I hope, by way of introduction, to have described some of the key ideas that sustain narrative therapy practice, specifically the notion that human identity is a social achievement, contingent on audience, culture, history, memory and agency (that which is available to us and what we make of all this at any one moment), and that the stories we tell ourselves and each other in our day to day lives and in therapeutic exchanges both constitute and are constitutive of our lives. I do not have time to do justice in this paper, other than in passing, to the burgeoning literatures of the narrative therapies, but if aspects of this paper capture your imagination, I recommend White and Epston, 1991; Freeman and Combs, 1996; Monk, et al, 1997; Morgan, 2000; Payne, 2000; Bird, 2000, 2004; Carey and Russell, 2004; and Speedy, 2000, 2000a, as good introductory texts.

Situating the narrative therapies

To give a quick and incomplete overview, narrative therapists are perhaps the most well known contingent amongst a burgeoning new wave of discursive, relational or 'post-psychological' therapists. As such, they are interested in how people have come to make unique sense of their lives and of how people make and remake sense of this experience through the construction of narratives: that is to say, through the unfolding of sequences of events, through time, to form a plot. Narrative practitioners are perpetually curious about the kinds of stories that people tell: the habitual well-rehearsed personal stories, the dominant discourses of the day, the myriad opportunities for more local discourses and the continuous possibility of alternative or preferred stories.