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WESTERN CONFIGURATIONS

Ways of being

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Introduction

During my time as an undergraduate in the mid-1990s, I was in the fortunate position of finding myself studying under the watchful eyes of Joanna Overing (American), Ladislav Holy (Czechoslovakian) and Sandor Hervey (Hungarian-born linguist) who all congregated at the University of St Andrews, Scotland. Many times over the years we were brought together over Lévi-Strauss (1968) seminal essays "The effectiveness of symbols" and "The Sorcerer and his Magic" (1963). I had only been able to access and read from the English edition of *Structural Anthropology*: a core text for the Social Anthropology degree. It wasn't until my doctoral research into mental health and psychopathology that I really appreciated my own lived experience and what Levi–Strauss called the 'shamanistic complex' as "the faith and expectations of the group, which constantly acts as a sort of gravitational field within which the relationship between sorcerer and bewitched are located and defined" (1963, p. 168). Lakoff (2002) refer to "the structured communication between doctor and patient activates a therapeutic potentiality that exists within individuals". In the therapeutic setting, it is said that "the drug can be both a substance and symbol, and this duality is one of a number of elements that cannot be neatly tangled" (2002, p. 73). In Holy's lecture, he evoked Levi-Strauss's curing ritual performed among the Kuna Indians of Panama during a moment of a difficult childbirth (he elaborates this point even further): "what she does not accept are the incoherent and arbitrary pains which are an alien element in her system but which the shaman, calling upon myth, will integrate within a whole where everything is meaningful" (1963, p. 198). I was entranced by the power of the words and the creative images and symbols of meaning within other cultural groups. I was keen to know more. I wanted to explore these symbols and meanings as

well as the spaces between things for the similarity between these two texts. I was impressed by the potentiality of the inner world meeting the outer world through the lens of anthropology.

W.H. Rivers (1864–1922) was the founding father of ethnology and ethnography: a methodology which embedded moments of lived experience understood as trauma. This theme was carried forward by Malinowski(1913) and Radcliffe-Brown (1912). However, it was Levi-Strauss (1963) who really conceptualised these moments of intrasubjective disturbance and rupture as performative and symbolic efficacy (Siddique, 2012). Rivers (1911), in the profession of psychiatry and at a time of the dawning of psychoanalysis, understood about working with his own vulnerability, as we, as therapists and at times as anthropologists, now realise the importance of the sharing of ourselves. Anthropologist and ethno-psychoanalyst Devereux (1967) suggests that "the subjectivity inherent in all observation [is] the royal road to an authentic, rather than fictitious, objectivity . . . defined in terms of what is really possible, rather in terms of 'what should be?'" (196: xviii). So, whoever the observer is, they are bringing themselves into their perspective of the helping process. My childhood was partially in Birmingham, then as a teenager in Scotland. As a first-generation Muslim, I was filled with stories of angels (malayka) made of light while the hidden spirits (jinns) were shaped from fire. I loved listening to the fascinating tales of benevolent spirits who were also prone to trickery. Often, these jinns lured disbelievers to their deaths, much like the fragmented myth of the sirens (Blanchot and Josipovici, 1982). For me, these jinns represent the 'absent presence' across the two domains of anthropology and psychotherapy and give me an understanding of people's different ways of meaning making. This was my cultural upbringing. Is it any different from transference and countertransference in psychotherapy and Freud presenting the past to work through things in the present on an individual and collective level? In my psychotherapeutic work, I am beginning to see the space between anthropology and psychotherapy. In the case of anthropology, we use objects to think with, and in the case of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, we use objects to work through.

During my own training as a psychotherapist, I was filled with moments of anxiety and ambivalence. Mckenzie-Mavinga (2003) observed that "black issues are rarely addressed in a normative routine way"; the feelings of being missed were never engaged in dialogue within the group process or the skills work in triads. A sense of oppression and resistance remains to this day. On one occasion I arrived late, only to be met with a discussion about early childhood attachment and care from a significant caregiver. This led to a spirited and emotional exchange about anecdotal stories of poor mothering and neglect. When I wasn't able to engage with such stories, there was little attention and space given to my cultural expression of feeling the family being shamed if I discussed my parenting in such terms. Comments such as 'in denial', 'resistance' or 'repressed memories' warranted a barrage of concern over my readiness to practice as a trainee therapist. At the start of my third year, another black student joined and while

The reference of (Hviding and Berg (2014) goes at the end of the word vunerability

introducing ourselves in the training group, she announced she was the only black woman in the group. I felt silenced by her and the rest of the group and became aware of the lack of reflexivity (intersubjective dynamics and subjective responses) in this group and generally in training about multiculturalism, now seen as a tick box exercise rather than realising that each of us brings and makes our own culture in relationship with others (Devereaux, 1963, 1969). Over the years, these stories have become experiences of black and minority ethnic super-visees I have worked with. This experience was identified in the research by Mckenzie-Mavinga (2003,): negative counselling training experiences for black and minority ethnic psychotherapy students on post-graduate courses.

It feels as if black and minority ethnic students or clients are not seen as themselves. It reminds me of the work of Zizek (2005), recalling the story of the empty wheelbarrow. A worker is suspected of stealing on leaving the factory, with an empty wheelbarrow he was rolling in front of him. The guard on the entrance gates carefully inspects and acknowledges the wheelbarrow is empty. This interaction occurs repeatedly over a number of weeks until it is realised that what the worker was stealing were the wheelbarrows themselves. Are we look-ing at the thing in itself, or is it just a container? It only becomes something on recognition. It is a process I am really familiar with when working with refugees. Should we not be looking at what people carry in themselves? I aim to do that in the blending of my roles as an anthropologist and as a therapist.

My experience as a psychotherapist brings together these different perspec-tives on therapy, which we have gained from anthropology as well as my rec-ognition of the subjectivity of human experience as an exploration of myth making (Devereaux, 1963; Lévi-Strauss, 1978) and of reclaiming hidden objects. I see culture now as embracing all of the perspectives from the observer and the observed. Ethnography can explore more fully the unseen and the unspoken, i.e. the space between things, the fantasy relationships in the therapy room between people and between objects and the ellipses (Siddique, 2017) Here, I am using the definition of ellipsis as used in modern social technologies, meaning hesita-tion, intention or suspension. I see the concept of ellipsis (Calgett, 1959, p. 197) as expressing a range of linguistic and social phenomena, where the missing material can be recovered within the therapy session. The ellipsis is "in effect a space between the body and language" (de Certeau, 1988, p. 224); the meta-phor is used as a way of illuminating personal identity and the professional role between therapist and client. The creation and interpretation of the space can be a felt sense of diverse words and /or gestures and movements which offer the possibility of coexisting with the other. These ideas can be seen to what Win-nicott (1974, p. 51) referred to as "a reparative potential space" and a "perverse play space for discovery". This can generate meaning through the observer and the observer's internal process, which can be helpful for self-awareness and pro-fessional development. These spaces, which open up between the intersubjec-tive, interpersonal and internal, provide a gap in gaining greater insights. This is where the real creativity lies.

I will explore these concepts of '*ellipses*' and 'space between things' and how relevant and useful they can be for our practice as psychotherapists (Siddique, 2017). In this case, I am using the term ellipsis in its grammatical meaning of omission, hesitation or pause, usually giving an element of contextual clues, and indicated in text by a sequence of three points (. . .). Herodotus is deemed by many as the originator of ethnography and refers to ethnography as the science and the art of persuasion. His monograph entitled *Histories* is usually considered as discourses relating to foreign identities and difference. Themes of these are magnified in other ethnographical informed writings such as Ondaatje (2011), who offers a style of remembering and recognising through the anthropological gaze.

The concept of culture provides a methodological and theoretical focus of social processes through which individuals make sense of their world to give shape to identities, beliefs and values through interaction. It is in the present tense about self in relation with others and through past tense when reflections and recollections of previous memory or events have the ability to transcend place, space and time: "our past is present in us as a project" (Proshansky, Fabian and Kaminoff 1983). Nationality and identity are mapped through cultural artefacts, and motifs of emotional geographies map the connection of history between body and mind. It was the work of Turnbull (1987) which informed my own ethnographical psychoanalytical style of reflexive writing and research.

In essence, I am trying to write about the space between anthropology and psychotherapy, and if this is culture in itself. Or is it more elusive? My thinking embraces the ethnographical approach from the perspective of both life-worlds and worldviews embedded in the traditions of existentialism and phenomenology, which inform the intersubjective negotiation relationship, rooted to being-in-the-world (Heidegger, 1978). This approach of ethnography and therapy supports the revealing of the ethnographers' and therapists' "prejudices, ontological assumptions, and emotional dispositions" (Jackson, 2002). But what of 'insight'? I see this as ways of being and ways of making meaning and offering discovery. The ethnographic encounter has some similarities to the therapeutic supervisory process. The therapist work is about doing, and supervision is about being. It is about finding the ethereal voice of 'being here' while embodying the experience of 'being there' (Geertz, 1988).

Absent 'presence'

My work as an anthropologist and therapist is about imagining community and challenging essentialist views of identity through exploring intra-group difference, working through what Freud referred to as "moments of collective trauma and oppression".

Freud (2010) wrote about one of his own traumas when he witnessed an event where his father was shamed but nothing was said or acknowledged:

At that point I was brought up against the event in my youth whose power was still being shown in all these emotions and dreams. I may have been ten or twelve years old, when my father began to take his views upon things in the world we live in. Thus it was, on one such occasion, that he told me a story to show me how much better things were now than they had been in his days "When I was a young man", he said, "I went for a walk one Saturday in the streets of your birthplace; I was well dressed, and had a new fur cap on my head. A Christian came up to me and with a single blow knocked off my cap into the mud and shouted: 'Jew! get off the pavement!'" "And what did you do?" I asked. "I went into the roadway and picked up my cap", was the quiet reply. This struck me as unheroic conduct of the part of the big strong man who was holding the little boy by the hand. I contrasted this situation with another which fitted my feelings better: the scene in which Hannibal's father Hamilcar Barca, made his boy swear before the household altar to take vengeance on the Romans. Ever since that time Hannibal had had a place in my phantasies.

(pp. 218–219)

Another example of witnessing (absent presence) but not being able to intervene or make sense of it at the time was Fanon's (1952) experience, which he writes about in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1986). He describes being called out to on the street by a French child and "sees himself being seen":

Look a Negro! . . . Mama, see the Negro! I'm frightened. . . . I could no longer laugh, because I already know there were legends, stories, history and above all historicity. . . . Then assailed at various points, the corporal schema crumbled its place taken by a racial epidermal schema. . . . It was no longer a question of being aware of my body in the third person but in a triple person. . . . I was responsible for my ancestors.

In my own case as a young child about 5 years of age, I was accompanying my mother with my 4-year-old brother to the shops a few streets away from the family home in a culturally diverse area of Birmingham, England. My mother was dressed in a traditional Pakistani Punjabi shalwar kameez with headscarf. Two skinheads were walking parallel to us on the opposite site of the road. They suddenly took sight of us before my mother had a chance to hurry us further along the road. One skinhead crossed the road and suddenly towered over us. He pushed or slapped my mother to the ground and spat at her, calling us Pakis, before rushing back over the road, and both he and his friend began laughing; they ran to the far corner of the pavement and disappeared. When I turned to my mother, she was sitting on the ground looking quite stunned with my crying brother clinging to her neck. Out of fear for myself and concern for her I asked what happened . . . why did that man hit you . . . ? Her response as she pulled herself upright was to laugh and say, "no, he didn't hit me. . . . I just slipped . . ."

These violent events are moments that mark us all as '*other*' from society. The relational configuration of enduring feelings of shame and humiliation have a profound impact on our ways of relating. Miller and Stiver (1995) correctly identified how

> we become so fearful of engaging others because of past neglects, humiliations, and violations . . . we begin to keep important parts of our experience out of connection. We do not feel safe enough to more fully represent ourselves in relational encounters.
>
> *(1995, p. 1)*

I am reminded of my work as a therapist working with anthropologists returning from the field who are not able to write up their report or thesis. They have often witnessed events encountered in the field which triggered unresolved experiences of feeling silenced, humiliated, marginalised, rejected or demeaned, and these experiences may result in disrupting or disconnecting them from initiating, maintaining or being responsive in meeting vulnerabilities and imperfections with a degree of authenticity. Most of us have experienced some traumatic events in our childhood, perhaps not as vivid as these examples of identity and ethnicity. With this in mind, I want to show how ethnography offers an awareness of the relational dynamics of these experiences. The therapy process, much like ethnography, can offer the absent presence the opportunity for negotiation of difference from "irreconcilable affections, identifications, and places of personal anchorage" (Jackson, 2012, 2002).

My experience of anthropology, which I bring to my present role as Director of Counselling and Psychotherapy Training and Research, has enabled me to embed the reflexive approach across all the programmes. Students and tutors are encouraged to reflect on their personal experiences and meanings of their understanding of culture through conceptualising bricolage (Lévi-Strauss, 1962) and to recognise and appreciate the diverse and complex negotiations which influence meaning making. I like to focus especially on how recognition and memory operate in the context of contemporary issues of belonging through dialogical processes that are socially, culturally, morally and historically embedded, and how the work of therapy (re)imagine, (re)negotiates, (re)generates and re-configures (Warner, 1991) kin and other intimate relationships to survive during contemporary times of migration, displacement and marginalisation.

Auto-ethnography in clinical practice

Auto-ethnography is about creating a self-story wherein one can maintain one's vulnerability as well as one's power; the act of writing such a story can in itself be transformative, creating "spaces for thinking about the social that elude us now" (Richardson, 2000, p. 930). Auto-ethnography therefore offers us the chance to adopt a relational perspective, so as to understand the individual in relation to their context and to look at what space is created between the therapist and

client. This could be emotional, psychological, social–cultural or engendered space. At the heart of the relational research methodology is an honest, compassionate conversation about ourselves and our failings, a space where "we take measure of our uncertainties, our mixed emotions . . . and the difficulties of coping and feeling resolved, showing how we changed over time as we struggled to make sense of our experience" (Ellis and Bochner, 2000, p. 748).

The process of creating the text can give us an opportunity to present the whole of ourselves. Tierny (1998) suggests that "auto-ethnography confronts dominant forms of representation and power in an attempt to reclaim, through self-reflective response, representational spaces that have marginalised those of us at the borders" (p. 18). It is a blurring of methodology between the researcher and the researched. It encourages questioning from a wider social context and seeks to make meaning out of culture, events and life experience.

Auto-ethnography is fundamentally concerned with the therapeutic and epistemic potential of empty space. It is an intersubjective process of accounting for what happens between us, seeing the cultural scripting of participants and those who observe them as an interconnected web of relationships. These co-constructed narratives can evoke ways in which experiences are made meaningful through "effects that linger – recollections, memories, images, feelings – longer after a crucial incident is supposedly finished" (Bochner, 1984, p. 595). Auto-ethnography is an act of immersion in the very thing under investigation. In contrast to the 'evidence-based' culture of recent times, auto-ethnography does not attempt to validate rigidly structured theoretical propositions but instead responds to biographical disruptions, blind spots and fragments of social remembering through the relationship of subjective experience and space.

Ogden (1993) explores the notion of the potential space between mother and infant, which emerges through the developing awareness of where one individual ends and the other begins. According to Ogden (1993), this process of division takes place through a process of negotiation bounded by the cultural context. The infant, in this instance, is an interpreting subject who seeks to explain the behaviours and beliefs of others through projective identification. Similarly, the ethnographic collection of reflexive accounts and distant memories, which we ourselves re-author (Rabinow, 1977), re-establishes the capacity of the dialectical process to be a mode of 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973). Moutsou (2011, p. 232) has already pointed to a number of examples of anthropologists developing in dialogue with the people they studied. For ethnographers, living within the environment of study and interacting/conversing with their informants in their everyday lives can lead to transference, resistance and countertransference between anthropologist and informant (Robben, 1996), which in turn makes and unmakes spaces of displacement and/or projection. In this, it is similar to the dynamic between the analyst and analysand in terms of interpretational interventions, degrees of manipulation of relationships, developing awareness and witnessing of affect, shame, guilt and blame. As Vygotsky (1981) remarks: "It is through others that we become ourselves". Mitchell (1993, p. 132) has

illuminated how the individual is co-created from relational milieus in a way that is similar to the ethnographical encounter:

> The individual discovers himself within an interpersonal field of interactions in which he has participated long before the dawn of his own self-reflective consciousness. The mind of which he becomes self-aware is constituted by a stream of impulses, fantasies, bodily sensations, which have been patterned through interaction and mutual regulation with caregivers.
>
> *(p. 132)*

According to psychoanalysis and psychotherapy, transference becomes 'the object of treatment', and in ethnography we explore how we understand relatedness through conceptual frameworks of 'being here' (proximity) and 'being there' (distance) that are created through the flows and counterflows that take place between ethnographer and informant; similarly, the resonance between therapist and client in their meeting makes space for each subject's reflexivity about their intersubjectivity. The space that exists between the therapist and the patient should also be considered, taking into account cultural and social norms and standards (Bollas, 2003, 2011). As we remarked earlier, there is an act of creativity which uses the empty space to make meaning: "Thirty spokes joining together at one hub/But it is the hole in the centre that makes it operable" (Laozi, 1988; see also Crapanzano, 1994, p. 236).

I find that this way of using auto-ethnography can offer the researcher/therapist an accurate picture of the therapeutic process and the lived reality of that fluid process. Rescher (2000, p. 13) refers to experiences from which "insights emerge through collective assemblage through dialogue between informants". Lévi-Strauss (1962) refers to such orderings of experiences, events, things and processes as materials (real or imagined) which are retrieved or gathered together to make a new identity or a possible subversive meaning. Derrida remarks that "if one calls *bricolage* the necessity of borrowing one's concept from the text of a heritage which is more or less coherent or ruined, it must be said that every discourse is *bricoleur*" (1978, p. 360). The counsellor or psychotherapist, as much as the client, creates a co-constructed narrative with what is available. Hatano and Wertsch (2001) discuss the ideas of assembly and *bricolage*, proposing that the "mind develops by incorporating the community's shared artefacts accumulated over generations" (2001, p. 78), which develop unequally as a discourse of the marginalised and oppressed, opening up a 'third space'. The therapy room is the liminal space between the outside world and the life-world of the client. The third space is an in-between realm devoted to the 'discourse of dissent', a space where for fifty minutes or an hour the defined and the definer are free to be '*embodied in their particularity*' (Bhabha, 2004), and that moment is witnessed.

As an academic who spends her time teaching a range of research-methods approaches to other caring professionals, I have found that using my earlier experience of fieldwork in anthropology presents ideas for enhancing the written work which would address the 'space between things' at the same time as it respects the client's narrative. The ethnographical approach goes beyond the

beyond the mere act of storytelling to create an experience of the 'field' through an analysis of field and headnotes to generate insights. An ethnographic approach gave me a clearer way of expressing myself and the participatory process I underwent in observing the self in its relations with the 'other'. It helps to address the space between things and the feeling of in-between-ness itself (Siddique, 2011).

The space between things

> Doors and windows are cut
> To make a room
> It is the empty spaces that we use
> Therefore, existence is what we have,
> But non-existence is what we use.
>
> Clay is moulded into a pot,
> But it is the emptiness inside
> That makes it useful
> > *– Laozi (cited in Zhu Xiao,*
> > *Johnson, 2012)*

This extract from a poem by Laozi is suggestive of the function of empty or negative space – space held in place to create a boundary, giving shape to the wall of a building or the skin of clay pot. The disciplines of anthropology and psychotherapy speak of the potential inherent in empty space, and authors have described the way in which ritual interactions allow for emptiness. Empty space has been seen as fundamental to *basins of attraction* (Deacon, 2006), and as an essential quality of a society that tends to self-organise, or, conversely, that is in a state of collective fragmentation.

The space between things, like the 'hole in the wheel' of dynamic self-sustaining systems (Deacon, 2006), can act as a principle of attraction and organisation and so give rise to meaning and order. There is much to be learned in this respect from ways of relating which are natural, mutual and self-organising, and which are sensitive to the complexity of the modes of interaction between the subjective self and external objects. I suggest that we hold onto the essence of qualitative inquiry and so retain our sense of the fragility of these relationships, rather than adopt the universalist and explicit language of big-data-driven humanities, which tends to obscure or pass over this fragility.

As an anthropologist and psychotherapist, I consider fieldwork in and out of the therapy room as a process and as an interaction. I see the emerging material as framed autobiographical narratives of the self. Geertz (1973) remarked, following Max Weber, that

> man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun. I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning.
>
> *(p. 5)*

As psychotherapists, what we observe is a web of relationships which is woven through rituals, interactions and transactions. For me, collecting stories in the field of psychotherapy and counselling is a process of writing and creating the text of the individual's lived experience – what passes between the researcher/ therapist and the client is a hermeneutic-dialectic method of inquiry (Gadamer, 1999) which explores human behaviour and belief understood as a socially constructed truth. In order to understand a human being, one should aim for, to use Gadamer's expression, 'a fusion of horizons' – combining different aspects that shape our understanding of the world we live in and our behaviour in it.

The everyday world in which we live as individuals, and in which we work as psychotherapists, is evoked into 'reflective consciousness' through engaging in the act of interpretation. The act of interpretation makes and unmakes things, explicitly conceiving of the object as being in the foreground or blurring it into the background through our experience of and relationship to the object in terms of its purpose or usefulness. These practices and relationships make for 'intersubjective encounters', which Heidegger (1978) refers to as *Dasein* ('being there', 'presence' or 'existence'), the space in which meaning and truth is arrived at through forging consensus "between judgement and the world" to arrive at understanding.

Ethnographical examples from fieldwork in anthropology and psychotherapy

An example of combining of auto-ethnography with insights of 'others' is the work of French author, surrealist and ethnologist Michel Leiris (1934), who already in the early 1930s realised the value of combining his personal ('being there') and professional presence, first during the Dakar-Djibouti expedition, and later in his more detailed accounts on the Gondar of Ethiopia, as well as French Antilles (Leiris, Jamin and Mercier, 1996; Bošković, 2003). The paradox of the encounter between different worlds as different cultures is nicely summed up in a quote from his diary.

> Right away this afternoon I go with Abba Jérome to see [the Ethiopian woman] Emawayish and give her pens, ink, and a notebook so she can record for herself – or dictate to her son – the manuscript [of her songs], letting it to be understood that the head of the expedition, if he is pleased, will present her with the desired gift.
>
> Emawayish's words this afternoon when I told her, speaking of her manuscript, that it would be especially good for her to write down some love songs like those of the other night: *Does poetry exist in France?* And then: *Does love exist in France?*
>
> *(Cited in Clifford, 1988, p. 129)*

By embedding the auto-ethnographical approach into the clinical encounter, this method "allows the reader (and the writer) to experience something new – to feel, to learn, to discover, to co-create" (Ricci, 2003, p. 594).

I have worked with refugees and asylum seekers who come to psychotherapy to get a report to authenticate their experiences and to support their application to stay in the UK

As a practitioner, I have chosen a phenomenological inquiry approach to explore the relational self and identity in order to access an understanding of another's psychological health through social interaction, social reproduction and self-awareness. I choose to create a mini ethnography, which is a means to conserve an old identity while allowing for the creation of a new identity through a range of subjective, intersubjective, constructed and inherent configurations depending upon the context and the relative privilege each of these interactions allow for. At times in the process of therapy, there is a readiness to abandon, exploit or destroy the individuals' self-concept, efficacy, access to well-being and associated cultural resources.

An illustration from my own practice is a vignette I have called *Sweet and Sour*

> Qasim was a 25-year-old male Muslim refugee who was referred by his GP for low mood and withdrawal from engaging with his social space and the public environment. He claimed instantly on meeting me and my confirming that I was to work with him that we could communicate through the 'street' dialect of Sikh Punjabi, an Indo-European tonal language from an area across the Punjab and Chandigarh region.
>
> We used creative elements such as drawing, noting down observations from both the therapist and the client and then reflecting upon the writing done before, between and during the sessions to offer self-reflection and insight to cultural practices of being a young gay Muslim man in Lahore.
>
> Qasim worked on his emotional blockages through identifying different 'configurations of self' or modes of being. He often spoke about how being a gay man in an Islamic country such as Pakistan was configured differently. Qasim realized he was gay after an encounter with a boy at the local high school in Lahore, Pakistan. In this area homosexuality was based on perceptions of behaviour, religious obligations, class and family obligations in a patriarchal society. "I found it easy to be a silent author narrating my existence as though a mime, to exist between the silences and invisibility and hope not to be discovered too soon", spoke Qasim as he rested a finger on a black and white photocopy of a photograph of a scene from a Mela in which a group of men stood under a cedar tree laughing. As the conversation developed during the course of the therapy, Qasim produced more bits of paper and photographs from a carrier bag and what began to emerge was that this was his opportunity to curate the fragmentations of his past life by illuminating the differences from the insider to a changing perspective of being between cultures. He was attempting to trace his everyday lived experience in the recent past. In the following session a week later Qasim continued to express a sense of awe into his own

cultural insights about 'living creatively, living two lives . . . [he shakes head and he breaks with my gaze and looks out the window] and the other life is lived with dishonesty most of all to ourselves'. I felt he was marking the absence of presence. By crossing gender, sex and sexuality, this could be seen as a way of organising his experience as a constructed identity. Definitions of masculinity and femininity for sweet and sour, in the Sikh Punjabi language, are *Miṭhē*, which denotes sweet, while *Khaṭā'ī* refers to sour. The bittersweet tale following the masculine and sour path would be the 'rastaa', while the feminine/sweet would be 'raa' – the tone is softened according to the distance traced across the engendered experience. The rastaa is that of the smartphone and the raa is the apps to meet other gay men in the area. At other times Qasim referred to the contradictions of how difficult it was not to be lost between identities and found it useful to trace his identity through feminine/sweet and masculine/sour by othering one's own experiences to tolerate the differences and indifferences. He often found himself in the middle ground where there was no taste.

So began Qasim's auto-ethnographical writing as an accounting of his experiences and a way of integrating his sexuality through each fragment of shimmering cloth he had retrieved when fleeing the threat of violence and persecution in Pakistan. Each fragment and each element has gone some way to create a new configuration of the self. Qasim recited the past of a life of beauty and now he spoke about living amongst something dull and ugly longing for a future to start. Qasim is still waiting for the decision of his asylum seeker's application with the UK Home Office – whether he will be allowed to remain on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

It is within this context that the ethnographical approach offers us an opportunity to explore 'being there' or 'presence' by '*getting with*', through developing relationships with people in the field and sharing their experiences to inform our understanding of their (and our) culture. For the ethnographic psychotherapist, the therapeutic relationship is the central focus when working in cross-cultural spaces. One of the most famous examples from anthropology is Bateson's study of the Iatmul in 1930s (Bateson, 1958). Bateson clearly demonstrated how the spaces and relationships of the anthropologists and the peoples they study are interwoven, how they constantly change and how they are (also) a product of one's own cultural upbringing. To this day, his monograph, *Naven*, stands as one of the finest examples of critical ethnography – and it is no surprise that Bateson's work remained of interest to psychologists and psychotherapists. Bateson looked at an intergenerational authoring of experience whilst still referencing the self in relation to the other. His approach has influenced my own therapy work and writing. Reflections on the place of culture should lie at the heart of psychotherapeutic practice and process. The different ways of being and belonging comprise the space that the therapist recognises in their own and their clients' identities, and which is captured in an ethnographical moment

of recognition. These are therapeutic encounters across culture, belief and ethnic spaces that are connected through cultural transference.

Relational ethics: writing culture

Of course, whatever approach to understanding the lived experience of others we adopt, it is likely to have limitations. Henrich et al. (2010) have argued that the experimental findings of a number of psychological and behavioural disciplines research have been drawn from Western, educated, industrialised, rich and democratic (WEIRD) participants, who are only "representative of 12% of the world's population", and yet the findings are routinely generalised cross-culturally. If we don't look for a broader methodological base, which considers the therapeutic relationship from different aspects, then we are in danger of doing exactly what Henrich et al. have warned against: researching a specific group of people who have been carefully selected and generalising the findings. As a black therapist, I can see the lack of diversity and cultural differences in the therapy room, on the part of both clients and therapists. As psychotherapists and counsellors, we need to expand our awareness and understanding of our cultural differences, both as a political critique of our profession as much as a principle of sensible research. We need to work and research across disciplines and across cultures to eliminate the artificial boundaries we create in reflecting the rationalist tendencies of Western scientific thought and judgement. The social and political context of qualitative inquiry method is therefore important. The collection of data and its analysis should be considered controversial, particularly in the way we write and interpret the facts.

A new approach to our work and research might call for a degree of self-disclosure by the researcher in the public domain, which may impact on the researcher's role as therapist. If a client came across the research, how would it impact on the therapeutic relationship? Do such writings lead to feelings of insights, discomfort, identification or rejection? I came to realise that when supervisees or trainees ask to see a copy of one of my articles, I always wonder what their reaction will be and whether they will think differently about me through this kind of writing and sharing. Is it possible to write in a way that the reader can gain access to the inner life of the participants, or is there an unavoidable degree of competition about what gets interpreted and what gets left out? Ultimately, it is the ethnographer who is writing the story. Yet this visibility of the author in the eyes of the subject, a problem not shared by the authors of novels, reminds us of the potentials inherent in the space between therapist and client, and of the possibility of unexpected events emerging from that space.

Conclusion: somewhere between ellipsis and precision

On reading Paterson's poem "An Elliptical Stylus" (1993), I find it offers a phenomenological understanding and personal experience of vulnerability and hope

mirroring what is explored in therapy and seeking to place it within a wider political, economic and cultural context of the ethnographical encounter. This is an extract of the poem:

> he showed me how
> he'd prime the deck for optimum performance:
> it's a lesson that I recall – how he'd refine
> the arm's weight, to leave the stylus balanced
> somewhere between ellipsis and precision,
> as I gently lower the sharp nib to the line
> and wait for it to pick up the vibration
> till it moves across the page, like a cardiograph . . .
>
> *(1993, p. 2)*

> Paterson's analogy about the stylus being the instrument to produce the
>   voice of the individual
> reminds of the presence of space in everything. We are all on a bumpy
>   road; the stylus jumps,
> and that is what creates the resonance. We are constantly revisiting and
>   remembering old
> records. For the ethnographer, fieldwork offers a similar process of
>   unfolding knowledge about
> the unconscious factors behind the encountered vunerability
>
> *(Norander, 2017)*

which therapeutic and investigative intentionally transform consciousness in the process of what Freud (2010) referred to as the 'working through'. We could see 'fieldwork as confrontation' creating the "inevitable disruption of the sense of self that both the ethnographer and even his informants may experience" (Crapanzano, 1977, p. 70). This has brought about the author reworking their thinking behind the self in relation with other. This has implications for both theory and practice for the ethnographer's interactions with the informant. My work as a therapist and anthropologist has significantly raised my awareness of what I as an anthropologist am working through with my own stuff. My ethnographical work has focused on vulnerability and marginality.

My training from a relational methodology of ethnography embeds culture in the practice of everyday interaction. Enshrined in my experience of being raised in Sufism, which understands mental well-being and mental illness as being beyond the deficit model of the western scientific paradigm of disease and disorder, I attempt to focus on the breach of communitas (Esposito, 2010; Turner,1969), which informs taboos/customs and disturbances of social configurations. Most training in Western psychological approaches do not fully embrace the clients' spiritual dimensions of life and of experience (OwusuBempah and Howitt, 1995). As a clinical anthropologist working within a therapeutic frame, I learned from working diverse realities to offer the opportunity for a space

to hold a restorative dialogue and harmonise the uncertainties experienced in the everyday (Siddique, 2012). My experience as a black academic facing regular micro-aggressions when working with diverse learners from diverse backgrounds hopefully informs my culturally relative-therapeutic work. As an academic working in the field of training potential therapists for the future, I integrate anthropology into the training as I realise the importance of the diverse ways of being in the world today.

Psychotherapy and psychoanalysis need to be understood as within the idiom of the cultural liminal space between and in the ellipsis, evocative of an absent presence of an empty fullness of being in the world, referred to by Sapir (1932, p. 236): "The true locus of culture is in the interactions of specific individuals, and on the subjective side, in the world of meanings, which each one of these individuals may unconsciously abstract for himself from his participation in these interactions". When we think of the practice and performance of therapy, we need to do so with the grammar of the ellipsis of the space between things which gives the dialogue its form. As therapists we hold on to the relationship which can give both space between and can resonate the fixity and the fluidity of the encounter.

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