



Narrative Supervision as a Counter Story Development

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When I set my heart and mind to start a doctoral program in 2016, I wasn't seduced by the legitimate benefits of having a few letters after my name or the titles that represent a level of notoriety. You see reader, I redesigned my life to make space for the ideas and practices I was longing for since I immigrated from Brazil to pursue a master's degree in counseling. Part of making space to be all in for this adventure included resigning from a job that helped develop so much of my identity as a therapist and packing up all my belonging to live in a city and a culture that I knew nothing about. The excitement of being around other students and the opportunity to dedicate time to immerse myself in different ways of thinking about supervision had me sold even before orientation day.

Remembering the years of supervision I received during my master's program at San Diego State University, I was inspired by the ways my supervisors/mentors honored my lived experience and personal knowledge by allowing me to develop a practice of therapy that was more aligned with my own values and beliefs as a person. I believe I have been able to remain close to the spirits that helped guide those supervision meetings. In particular, the spirits of narrative practices. As a result, my desire to recapture the essence of a supervision approach that was based on relational ethics has been a powerful force in my journey as a supervisor.

During my master's training, I was given the freedom to explore and embrace my own knowing when it came to my work as a therapist. This experience was so meaningful to me that it became the center of my hopes when working with graduate students during my doctoral training. However, in contrast to my previous narrative supervision, my doctoral training followed a more traditional and expert-based approach to supervision. I grew more and more disheartened during my weekly supervision of supervision meetings, as it became clear that there was very little room for the personal knowledges and lived experiences of supervisees, and even for aspiring supervisors like myself inside this expert-based supervision context – it honestly made it painful going to classes so much so I could feel the effects of this despair in my body.

In the midst of this despair, I sought counsel in my 'secret' collection of writings on alternative supervision ideas and practices that were more in line with my own hopes and desires as a supervisor. In particular, the writings of Christopher Behan on examining the contradictions of inherent power arrangements in traditional supervision (Behan, 2003); the writings of Sarah Kahn and Gerald Monk on examining social justice initiatives that inform narrative practices applied to supervision (Kahn & Monk, 2017); the writings of Marcela Polanco on knowledge as a fair trade applied to decolonizing framework in response to the effects systems of power have on people's lives (Polanco, 2015); and the work of Pilar Hernandez-Wolfe and Teresa McDowell on exploring the issues of social privilege and accountability among MFT educators (Hernandez-Wolfe & McDowell, 2011).

Longing to return to my home of understanding, I sought out relationships with former supervisors and colleagues who served as a life-line - or perhaps an IV infusion of the spirits of narrative practices - to resist being further recruited into traditional supervision practices. I found much inspiration and solace in the mentorship and support of Jan Ewing - who more than anyone else embodied the spirits and





relational ethics of narrative practices. Undeterred in my desire and commitment to make narrative practices the center of my supervision work, I searched high and low for any readings I could find on the matter. My searchings led me to an article written by Tom Carlson and Martin Erickson titled "Honoring and privileging personal experience and knowledge: ideas for a narrative therapy approach to the training and supervision of new therapists add (Carlson & Erickson, 2001). It felt like I won the supervision lottery! Their ideas became a refuge to me during the ever-present recruitment of traditional supervision ideas that were surrounding me.

What I appreciate most about Tom and Marty's writings were the radical ways in which they centered the therapist's knowledge, experience, and preferred relational ethics during supervision and sought to situate them in a rich counterstory of their lives. With my heart now light and open, I read and re-read that article countless times. Ultimately, in their words, I found refuge and an emerging sense of belonging that perhaps I was not alone in my searchings. With each reading of the paper, I found myself feeling more and more inspired – as I was being rescued from drowning in the ocean of graduate despair. One quote was particularly meaningful to me:

"We support an approach to training/supervision which seeks to bring forth the personal knowledge, skills, hopes, and so on which are central to the new therapist's desires to be a therapist. This approach is centered in a belief that, as persons, trainees have valuable lived experiences, knowledge, skills, and desires that have invited them into this helping field. It is also centered in the belief that trainees have sincere and genuine desires to help and care for others, that they probably have special skills in caring for others, and that these skills and desires should be explored, brought forth, and made more primary to their work as therapists. We also believe that for new therapists to develop confidence in their abilities, they need to experience personal agency in regard to their work, to experience themselves as having an active role in the shaping of their lives as therapists, thus experiencing what Harre (1983) refers to as "self-knowledge." (Carlson & Erickson, 2001, p. 204)

Finally, feeling as if I had some ground to stand on, I took their ideas and tried them everywhere. I even designed a two-page summary handout of their article whenever I had the chance to present my work during my supervision of supervision meetings. These handouts became a sort of political leaflet that I spread wherever I went (which may or may not have contributed to my reputation). In hopes these leaflets would bring some legitimacy to ideas and practices I held dear in my work as well in my life, I would present case after case armed with renewed confidence.

As luck would have it, I attended a special narrative conference in honor of the 10th anniversary of Michael White's passing in San Diego. During the opening keynote, David Epston instructed the audience to find someone who had known Michael and speak to them about his influence in their lives and their work. To my surprise, when I turned around Tom was standing right in front of me. Before I could collect my thoughts to say something clever, I blurted out: "Wow I can't believe it, Tom I cite you all the time in my school assignments." I told Tom about my interest in narrative supervision and the ways I have been sneaking his ideas into my work at every opportunity. Tom, with a look on with surprise and with a bit of a humble laugh said, "That article was written a long time ago and I would be very interested in knowing how you have been taking up the ideas in your work." Our conversation led to the agreement that supervision has been a neglected topic in narrative therapy and that it might be worth our while to study these ideas together and see if they are still relevant to contemporary supervision practices.





After several conversations over email, Tom proposed that might work together using a bit of an apprenticeship approach where I would send Tom transcripts of my supervision meetings with a student while trying out Tom's and Marty's ideas some 15 years later in my context. We decided that we would make this an informal research project from the outset by inviting one potential supervisee to serve as a co-researcher along the way. There was one twist to our project that Tom wanted to try out. Tom wanted to work with a student who was not a narrative therapist to see how narrative supervision as counterstory development might benefit someone who was not a narrative therapist. After enthusiastically presenting this opportunity to a group of graduate students at my university, Dahlia (who identified as an Emotion-Focused Therapist) excitedly agreed to join us. Dahlia and I agreed to meet for narrative supervision once a week for a year focusing our work exclusively on developing a counterstory of her preferred identity as a therapist. Rather than focusing on teaching narrative practices and skills, our approach to supervision would center on Dahlia's own values and ethics in regards to how people should be treated and the history of how these knowledges emerged throughout the living of her life. To help me learn how to better situate supervision in a counterstory context, I sent a transcript to Tom once a month and Tom, following the apprenticeship model that he learned from David Epston, would write in questions to Dahlia as if he were the therapist. Tom and I would then meet to review a transcript of my supervision conversations with Dahlia and read the proposed alternative questions for Dahlia and myself to consider that might further the development of her counterstory as a therapist. Dahlia and I would then review these questions in the subsequent supervision meetings. Just to give you, reader, an example of what supervision conversations that are centered around therapist counterstory development might look like, we offer you the following excerpt from a supervision meeting between Danna and Dahlia. I sent the below transcript to Tom and waited anxiously for his reply with his proposed questions that were included directly into the transcript in italics.

Danna: Dahlia, I'm thinking back and remembering the first article that gave me hope about supervision that was written in 2000 by Tom. It really inspired me to start this process of learning and how I preferred to be with others. I know that when we started this supervision project we were talking about relating to people, right? Is it fair to say that that's true?

Dahlia: Yes!

Danna: Now that we were able to re-visit your own history about what you already knew about being with others and how to help people and how to relate to people. In many ways, what we re-discovered about your story being a dancer and how much you bring from that experience when you meet with others...

Dahlia: Right, that's right.

Danna: That's exciting. Now, believe it or not, Tom in 2000 wrote about these processes in terms of stages. If you think about what Narrative Therapy it's, it sounds like, we're open to anything and it may look like there's not much structure.

Dahlia: Right, right. That's what I heard. I don't think (there is a structure) so.

Danna: But, now that's the fun part of what we are doing. I think we're ready to move forward with the





next stage based on the work we have been doing together. Just looking back at our next few months and what is ahead of us, graduation, clinical work ...what a gift. I had an idea and I thought about interviewing you about your own hopes. I believe it would help me to understand your moral preferences and what has inspired you to pursue this work. David has been talking about something we call *moral ethics* and *moral character*... I believe that we have been exploring these ideas in which we started to really honor the relationships that you described having with the children you work with... and how you have always been a rebel refusing to believe that life was either black and white, but rather shades of gray. Right?

Dahlia: (laughs) Yes!

Danna: Would you help me understand what are your hopes about how others experience themselves when they are in your presence?

[I think it might be important to do a little more leading into this question. Something that might prepare her for the idea that we are accountable for the way that our thoughts, actions, inactions, etc. shape the stories of the people that we are with. Here is a quote from Michael to help situate this idea: "If we acknowledge that is the stories that have been negotiated about our lives that make up or shape or constitute our lives, and if in therapy we collaborate with persons in the further negotiation and renegotiation of the stories of person's lives, then we really are in a position of having to face and to accept, more than ever, a responsibility for the real effects of our interactions on the lives of others" (White, 1995, p.14-15). The reason that setting this up is so important is that it is critical that Dahlia (and all therapists) appreciate the gravity of this idea so that she can really weigh into this conversation with everything that she has.]

Dahlia: One of the children I work with yesterday was telling me about the two different versions of herself, the version at home, the perfect daughter, and then like the version of her that's herself with her friends. And I said, "Do they really have to be these two versions of yourself? Would you like to be one version? Or do you like being two versions of yourself? And which one do you choose to be here?" We explored all those things. So I think I want people to experience themselves the way that they want to see themselves.

Tom: *And how is it that you would hope that they see you seeing them? What kind of person would you hope that they see when they look into your seeing eyes?*

[I return here to another way of asking the question because her answer is about how she wants people to see themselves rather than how she wants them to see how she sees them. This is a rather unusual way to think and it requires some care to help a person make the shift.]

Danna: Do you have any ideas about why experiencing themselves in such a way that they feel safe with you might feel like...for example, in the body?

[I like the idea of going back to the body to help give her moral preference more substance. It is just a little early to do since her preference needs more development. It still hasn't reached the level of a moral preference.]





Dahlia: I do, I guess like warm would be one but the warm for lots of different things. You can feel warm if you're angry when you experience it as a shift. If you feel like things are out of place and get that feeling in your stomach. I'm hoping that when they feel safe with me, that it feels more like coming together like a key fitting inside, or like peace instead of feeling like the grinding.

Tom *If we return to this idea of a moral preference, the idea of your own best hopes for how others feel about how you feel about them when they are with you, is safety one of those things? When a person comes into the room for the first time, is it your hope that they might somehow hear, in a feeling kind of way: "You and your life and your words and your feelings are safe with me here?"*

Danna: Dahlia, I am curious... if we were to invite the person you are talking about into this room. What would you say that...if you were to ask her about the way that they felt
[Tom: About how you feel about them as a person] in your presence?

Dahlia: I feel like they would say just being me, and that everything's comfortable. And I'm just who I am, instead of trying to be this person or that person.

[By adding the phrase that I did above, it allows Dahlia to move more into the realm of relational or moral preference. Here Dahlia is talking about what she wants for the person she is working with, to feel comfortable, which limits Dahlia's accountability in terms of the part that she plays in shaping the person's experience of herself.]

After receiving Tom's proposed questions and meeting with him to study them, I brought the questions back to Dahlia in the subsequent supervision meetings for both of us to evaluate and consider as to their usefulness in extending our supervision conversations. This new apprenticeship pedagogy to supervision was liberating as it reversed all hierarchies that were so familiar to me in traditional approaches to supervision – as Dahlia and I were now in a position of evaluating Tom's proposed ideas and questions rather than the other way around.

For example, in one of our individual supervision sessions Dahlia and I discussed noticeable ways she had claimed and relied on her own personal knowledges – that often times was subjugated in preference of professional knowledges – in her clinical practice. In this conversation as we talked about pressures of therapeutic performance, we storied her previous experiences as a dancer and an entertainer for children's events and how she could rely on these talents in her work as a therapist. Despite her extensive experience handling the pressures of performance as an accomplished dancer and professional fairy, these knowledges were never considered as a potential abilities to draw on when relating to her clinical work. Throughout our supervision sessions, through a careful storying of these talents, Dahlia came to understand the value of bringing these experiences with her as soon she would be graduating and flying solo as a therapist. Here is an example of one of these conversations:

Danna: Dahlia, I am curious to know since we started supervision if you have noticed any differences between what you know now and what you were asked to know? Would you say your understanding of being with others has changed?





Dahlia: I think there is difference between pressure times and no pressure times. If somebody was asking me a question in front of a patient, I felt like I was supposed to give the “right” answers from the book. Now, if I am sitting in an office talking about a case, I will just use whatever language I have and be okay with it. I've learned patience, which is funny, because that is time where you should feel less pressure because patients usually do not know the clinical terms that you're supposed to be using.

Danna: Would it be fair to say that you work well under pressure? You have shared with me that you had so many personal moments thinking back to your history... you told me you had to ‘*handle a lot*’ in your dancing and performing. Are you starting to look back and claim those historical moments?

Dahlia: (Smiling in agreement) Now it’s almost like I have to!!! I mean, I have been trying to put language to it... unless you know terms from both disciplines (dance and therapy). Also, I noticed people have been asking a lot of me recently. Did I tell you that I will be in the Nutcracker this year and in 7 months I'm going to graduate? And it's going to be awesome!!!

Danna: Did you just say you are graduating in 7 months and it will be awesome?

Dahlia: (laughs) YES!!!

Danna: Will you be crossing the stage as you graduate with your fairy wings and all?

Dahlia: (Laughs) Yes!!! With wings and all. I will be flying.

Danna: Or dancing ? Do you have a preference?

Dahlia: Both (laughs). A lot of people have been asking me if I am still dancing? Or if I have anything to do with dance world? They ask: When did you stop dancing? All of those kinds of questions. When they ask me, “when did you stop dancing?” I have a visceral reaction on the inside. I firmly answer: “Well, *I never stopped dancing.*” I don't like saying it that way. That language of “stopped dancing.” No, I haven't stopped dancing. There is a side story when I was younger, growing up, a teacher had told me once: *There are dancers and there are pedestrians.* And that always stuck with me. And my parents would think it was so annoying, because I'd be walking down the street and I would say: “Oh, that one’s a dancer and that one's a pedestrian.” And they'd be like, “Well, why?” And I said: “I never... I'm not going to cross that threshold. I'm still going to be a dancer.”

Danna: Have you been refusing to be pedestrianized as a therapist?





EFFECTS OF NARRATIVE SUPERVISION

Tom, Dahlia, and I met on two occasions throughout the year to interview Dahlia about her experience of narrative supervision and to help us better understand the effects of these conversations in her personal and professional lives.

One of the unique propositions about this narrative approach to supervision is the focus on rich counterstory development as opposed to skill development. In speaking about her experience with Tom, Dahlia commented on the uniqueness of this way of engaging in supervision and its effects on her sense of self as a person and a therapist. Dahlia also spoke about how seeing her values and ethics as tied to a rich and long counterstory offered her a sense of hope that she could carry these values and ethics forward into her future work with clients and potential supervisees. The transcript below offers an example:

Dahlia: I know if I ever become a supervisor, this experience will influence the way that I would supervise a student. It was meaningful. Throughout my academic journey, I had to write all of these essays about who I am as a person and it requires thinking about yourself, but this has been completely different than any of those times I've sat down and would think about writing an essay about myself.

Tom: I wrote a paper a long time ago, called "Recapturing the person in the therapist." In the paper, I was saying is that in traditional self-of-the-therapist work, we are asked to think about ourselves and our lives and our histories as barriers that get in the way of our work—our lives and our histories and our relationships with our families of origin are deficits. But what if our lives and histories are much more than that. What if they are rich in knowledge and experiences that might makes us uniquely capable of working with people in their suffering. Might our histories create particular sensitivities or knowings about how to be with people in ways that might be healing or un-suffering? So then the idea is that narrative supervision would look a lot less like teaching how to do narrative therapy, but focus on maybe helping you kind of develop your own your own story about who you are, as a therapist about what matters and that comes from the whole stock of your lived experience as a person—and for you as the dancer, right?

Dahlia: Right.

Tom: And how that can kind of come to life in your in your work in the present. So I guess what I am really curious about is... what it's been like for you to be involved in supervision that's not about how to do therapy but more about who are you as a person and if you can connect with that and story those experiences and knowledges they will show up in your work more freely.

Dahlia: I thought that on many occasions... it looks a little bit more like e therapy and it is definitely been a challenge but in a good way. For me, I'm trying to figure out places where I can privilege myself and honor myself in a way that I wasn't doing before. It's given me a little bit more opportunity throughout my experiences with my clients that I don't think I would have gotten in





another form of supervision, because I'm able to see myself and my strengths in a different way than I was before.

Tom: I'm interested in that. I'm interested in how you said that, that it allows you to see yourself differently, but also see your clients differently?

Dahlia: Yeah. I think I see myself and what I have to offer in a more positive way, instead of seeing myself through things that I don't know yet. I'm able to see what I do have to offer. So instead of always having to focus on well, wherever did I find this [intervention] in a textbook? Have I seen this in a textbook? I'm able to be: "Okay, well, maybe I don't know exactly how to approach the situation. But, you know, I've approached situations like this before, as a dancer or through doing birthday parties and I can just live through it." And maybe it doesn't go the way that I wanted to, but I can learn from that experience nonetheless. So, I bring everything from the past into my experiences with clients, instead of just being like, "I have this textbook knowledge that you don't really know how to use yet and I don't feel like it always fits for me." I struggled with a lot of those things before.

In addition to these more general effects of narrative supervision, I also reviewed our supervision transcripts with Dahlia to identify other possible effects. In reviewing the transcript of our final interview, we identified four primary themes related to the effects of our conversations throughout the apprenticeship. The themes are (1) Narrative freedom, (2) Narrative integrity, (3) Narrative embodiment, and (4) Narrative self-knowledge.

1. Narrative Freedom

Narrative freedom, a term developed by Freeman (1993) refers to the need for the story to be open-ended to invent new ways of being. Particularly, a good story begs the question: What will I do next? How will I invent new ways of being? Given the foundation of narrative therapy is to create opportunities for people to have more options and more say as they go about living their lives (White, 1995), this idea becomes extremely valuable during supervision as well.

Tom: I'm interested in the difference between having to rely on what you don't know yet—the book knowledge versus relying on the things that you might know quite intimately—things like dance and the other experiences that have come up in your conversations with Danna—your history of knowing how to be a particular kind of person?

Dahlia: Yes.

Tom: And what has that been like for you to, in your work, to not have to just rely on the book knowledge that's maybe up here? [pointing up to ceiling] And now to be able to act with what you already know because it's already part of your life history, like the dancing and the and the birthday parties?

(laughs)





Dahlia: It's been freeing in a way because I can be more of myself and I can see myself more in my work. There's a way of being with people and experiencing them through sitting with them and breathing the same areas that I think sometimes I would miss when I was thinking about what I don't know, or what I wish I knew in the moment. Sometimes I can from doing this work...I can breathe in the air and just be like, "Okay, I'm with you and I'm going to use myself and what I know."

2. Narrative Integrity

Another theme that emerged in our study of the supervision transcripts was the concept of narrative integrity. Freeman and Brockmeier (2001) refer to narrative integrative as not only to the harmony of proportion or beauty of form as principles of narrative of proportion form as principles of narrative composition but to the coherence and depth of one's ethical commitments, as evidenced by the shape of one's life." (p.76). In our work with Dahlia, it was our hope to situate her own ethical commitments related to her work with clients within the rich history of her own actions throughout the course of her life. By linking Dahlia's current ethical commitments to a long history of principled action in the world, it makes it more possible for Dahlia to call on these commitments and intentionally center them in her work. The following excerpt from our interview with Dahlia offers an example of narrative integrity:

Tom: Okay so, in isolation these different events from your past might have been used as material for you to feel shame or to feel bad about not doing the right thing. But when they were strung together or threaded together, as you said, what did that make possible for you?

Dahlia: It put them together in a way that it's like, these weren't just random coincidences that happened. I wasn't just rebellious this one time. And this one other time, I was staying true to myself all along.

Tom: So, one of the hopes in my conversations with people is to create a counterstory that has an "all along" quality to it—that if you put them together it wasn't a random bunch of incidents, has there been an all alongness that's been behind your rebellion? Is that fair to say—that it hasn't just been rebellion, but it's been rebellion on behalf of something. What would you say?

Dahlia: In a way sticking true to my values and what's important to me. Even if that's not what other people tell me, I'm supposed to think is important.

Tom: Yeah... and if you look at the moments that you have, maybe most fiercely rebelled against, I know that it's on behalf of you? But is it also on behalf of something more than you?

Dahlia: Yes (with a smile that you can hear through the audio recording).

Tom: Is there some kind of greater good here? Is it about some kind of moral principles that you might have about what life ought to be?

Dahlia: Yeah (timid with the smile)... I get if I think of some of the more difficult times for me to rebel or





the times that have been, bigger. I think a lot of it was more for well, even if this hurts me in the process, hopefully, the other person learns something so that others don't have to go through what I've gone through. So yeah, in a way it's been, maybe I can use myself to teach the other person so that I can better others experiences,

Here is another example that illustrates how Dahlia was able to develop a sense of narrative integrity as a result of our supervision conversations:

Tom Is that an example of the effects of your conversations with Danna... that you can just trust that knowing? If you look back on before...would you have just trusted it? Or do you think you might have thought it through like, "Okay, "I might have this inclination to do this, but I need to think about what the books say?"

Dahlia: Yeah, I definitely would have thought that through and be like, I don't really know if that's the thing, I'm going to stay over here where I am. Then if I had have decided to do it, I probably wouldn't have told my supervisor that I did it. And if he questioned me about it, if he just was in the room and he saw it and he questioned me about it, I would have been: Well, I don't really know.

Tom: Okay, so is that part of the part of the freedom? I was struck, Dahlia, by a lot of the different stories that Danna told about you ... about your life about some of the ways that you have been willing to kind of carve your own path in life. And I'm wondering if there's anything in particular, from the conversations about your life that has stayed with you the most?

Dahlia: Yes, I think, putting together and looking back at the stories ... really kind of tying together those stories of the times where I stood up for myself, or I went against what I was supposed to do are now tied together in a way that I didn't put them together before. I know that sometimes I go against what people say. But it's always been something that I've been a little bit more shameful. I didn't do what I was supposed to do. But I think through like, teasing them together, and threading them together with Danna. I've put them together in a way that kind of makes me proud of them. A lot of people would have just abandoned themselves in the situation, but I stood up for myself in a way that I'm proud of. Now, when I look back on it now.

It seems important to highlight here the effect that the "threading" together seemingly random events into a coherent story had on Dahlia's sense of self as a therapist. Freeman (1993) talks about the importance of re-collection, "the act of gathering together what might have been dispersed or lost... selectively and imaginatively, into a followable story". Without linking these past events through "an act of historical imagination... there would be no past and indeed no self, but only a sequence of dispersed accidents."

This in turn implies at least two things. First, without a trail of past events, there would be no story to tell. Second, without an act of the historical imagination, designed to give meaning and significance to these events and to glean the possible nexus of their interrelationship, there would be no past and indeed no self, but only a sequence of dispersed accidents."(Freeman, 1993, p. 47).





3. Narrative Embodiment

While the interest in how stories both influence and are influenced by the body has piqued in recent years, the idea of narrative embodiment has a long history in narrative therapy and can be found in Foucault's earliest writings (Foucault, 1980-1981). Foucault argued that dominant discourses in society have a way of inscribing themselves into our bodies and thus have a literal shaping effect on how our bodies express these discourses over generations. A primary example of this, according to Foucault, is the way that discourses around gender have literally shaped women's bodies over time as they strive to conform to ideal beauty standards. If dominant discourses do indeed have a shaping effect on how our bodies express themselves, then it would go without saying that problem stories over time have a felt effect on our bodies. Elsewhere, I have argued (Carlson & Paljakka, 2017) that felt the effects of the problem story can give problems a staying power if left unattended. While externalizing conversations can have an undoing effect on these felt bodily effects of the problem story, it is equally important in reauthoring or counterstory work that we provide opportunities for the new story to find its way into people's felt experience of their bodies, that the new story takes root both in the realms of meaning-making and embodied experience.

In our conversations with Dahlia, we were interested the possible ways that her emerging counterstory was entering into her felt and bodily experience of herself. This was particularly important to us, given the central role that her bodily experience of herself as a dancer played in her preferred expressions of herself growing up. The following excerpt from our interview with Dahlia offers an example of how the counterstory conversations in supervision found their way into her felt experience of herself as a person and her body.

Dahlia: This is going to sound so cheesy, but it's like embodying myself in a different way. It's much more than just talking about myself.

Tom: Embodying yourself? Say more about that. That's really interesting. Not cheesy, but interesting.

Dahlia: Accepting myself and make making meaning of myself in a completely different way. Sometimes they feel like, we talk and I externalize things... then I have to hug it all back inside. So I'm like, embodying it in a new layer. I'll get all back inside.

Tom: Hugging all back inside?

Dahlia: Yes, I got to hug it all back inside and embody it in a new way.

Tom: Is that what your conversations with Danna did? Is it the effect of hugging yourself back inside?

Dahlia: Yes!!! (laughs)

Tom: That's great. I like it... the embodying of yourself didn't give your (pause)... I'm reading somebody who's informed me of my question here but did it give your life, your story of yourself, some substance or a graspable form? Or that maybe somehow your convictions became more tangible to you?





Dahlia: Yes. I think a lot of the time things that I do things that I say happen, and then they go away. Digging some of these things up to honoring them, and make meaning of them brings them back up. I have a new way of embracing that story or embracing that part of me that I hadn't done before. So that's made it tangible and I realized that this one random story that I haven't thought about in a really long time now has a meaning and a purpose, and I'm incorporating it in a new aspect of my life. I think it just makes everything that I've experienced in life so much more important.

4. Narrative Self-knowledge

Carlson and Erickson (2003) state that one of the hallmarks of narrative supervision is that should it create a means for therapists to experience self-knowledge. According to Harre (1983) "Self-knowledge requires the identification of agentive and knowing selves" (p. 260). One of the key distinctions that we make here is the importance of relying on the history of a person's self-knowledge as an antidote to the often paralyzing effects of relying on professional knowledges. One of the effects of narrative supervision that Dahlia highlighted in our interview was that it legitimized and restored her sense of already knowing how to be and relate to people.

Tom: Would it be fair to say that you're pretty well acquainted with how to be with people in ways that might honor them? And you said that that kind of got lost along the way as you had to assume a professional role? Or were considering ideas about being a professional in some ways? Is that something that has been maybe restored to you a bit in your conversations with Danna?

(quick reply)

Dahlia: Yes, definitely!!! Yeah, yeah. Even I was having a conversation with my supervisor last night about how I was just sitting in the room. And then I was trying to regulate the kids in the room because they were all over the place. And I just went and I sat with them. And here's like, well, how did you know that it going and moving yourself and sitting with them? I'm like, well, because that's just what I knew...And then I just owned it.

Dahlia: I think I see myself and what I have to offer in a more positive way, instead of seeing myself through things that I don't know yet. I'm to see what I do have to offer. So instead of always having to focus on well, wherever did I find this in a textbook? Have I seen this in a textbook? I'm able to be like, Okay, well, maybe I don't know exactly how to approach the situation. But, you know, I've approached situations like this before and dancing or through doing birthday parties, that I can just live through it. And maybe it doesn't go the way that I wanted to, but I can learn from that experience nonetheless. So I bring everything from the past into my experiences with clients, instead of just being like, I have this textbook knowledge that you don't really know how to use yet. And I don't feel like it always fits for me. And I struggled with a lot of those things before.





Reflection and Theorizing:

One of the more radical departures of this approach to narrative supervision is its focus, at least in the beginning, on therapist counterstory development as opposed to the more common focus on therapist skill development. This is in no way meant to say that there are not important ideas and practices associated with narrative therapy that students need to learn, practice, and master. What we are proposing here is that these practices, if they are to have life, need to be situated in an experience-near and richly described story of the values and ethics that the therapist holds most dear. While the exploration of these closely held values and ethics begins in the present, in their hopes for the people with whom they work and for who it is that they want to be as therapists, it is critical that these current hopes, values, and ethics are storied into a long history of the development and enactment of these hopes in therapists' own lives and relationships.

In Dahlia's case, some of her hopes went against traditional expectations about therapist-client relationships and it was important to her that these hopes belonged to a long history of acts of rebellion to normative and authoritative standards in her life. Another important aspect of this storied process for Dahlia was how her history of a dancer or her work with children as a clown, brought with them many knowledges and practices that she could draw on in an experience-near way in her work with clients. When these "insider" knowledges are storied into her life, it elevates them to sit alongside or even above the more professionalized knowledges that she felt was so distancing and quieting of her voice in her work up to this point. With her knowledges, values, skills, and abilities, now storied into her lived experiences of life, it made it more possible for Dahlia to more immediately access them in work with clients. We believe that this is what Harre meant by self-knowledge. Rather than having to rely exclusively on outside knowledge, like a map or manual, which are often experience-distant, Dahlia's preferred practices and ethics can now come from the foundation of a rich experience-near story that is rooted in a long history of how she has enacted these hopes, values, and ethics in her life. In Dahlia's own words, "honoring them... and embracing that story... made it tangible" to her.

Having engaged in many supervision conversations over the years, while it is quite common that the hopes, values, and ethics expressed by my students were closely aligned to the values and ethics of narrative therapy, especially once they are given the freedom to separate from the professionalized accounts of what it means to be a therapist, it has been important to them that these values and ethics not be seen as belonging to narrative therapy, but that they have an intimate history in their own lives and relationships. Once this counterstory has taken hold in their lives, it provides a "welcome home", as one student put it, "for the questions and practices that I later learned as a narrative therapist."

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