

PoMo Gathering

LA PoMo & Educational Narratives Workshop 6 CEUs

PART 1: Tiny Questions In Action: How to Inspire Experience-Near and Resonant Tellings in Therapeutic Conversations

Sunday 11/10/2019, 8:45 am –12:00 pm

One of the most compelling aspects of Narrative Therapy for me is its insistence on giving voice to marginalized ideas, knowledges, and experiences. One way to honor that intention and bring those knowledges forward is by asking tiny questions -- questions about the *details* of people's lives.

We believe that it is a political act to engage in conversation with someone about their life -- the way we hear, the things we say, and the questions we ask all have effects. From this perspective, if a person describes their life in a general or broad way, and we respond by stopping our inquiry and settling on this broad account, we run the risk of reducing their experience to a pre-made/pre-existing standard that was not created by them, their family, or their community.

From a narrative way of thinking, every utterance of ours is an opportunity to get closer and closer to a telling of the person's life that is exquisitely specific to their lived experience -- a telling that *in its detail* activates nuance and possibility that can be noticed, seen, and known by only the person telling it. It is through our pursuit of specificity that we co-create meaning that is truly liberating.

In this workshop, we will review the tenets of Narrative Therapy that inspire the use of experience-near questions, and I will present some of the ways in which I engage specificity in therapeutic conversations. I will conduct a stop/start interview where workshop participants will be invited at intervals to offer questions for the interviewee's/client's consideration. This format will allow participants to apply the teaching, construct questions, and experience the effects of their asking.

Learning Objectives:

1. Articulate three theoretical underpinnings that motivate the practice of experience-near questioning.

2. Know five categories of questions to engage, activate, and promote detailed, experience-near tellings.

3. Use two points of entry for experience-near inquiry, and design sets of questions that attend to and amplify the specificity of people's lives.

Presented by Lyra Barrera

Lyra Barrera is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist and a Licensed Marriage & Family Therapist working in private practice at Larchmont Associates. She earned degrees in Psychology from Harvard University, Pepperdine University, and the California School of Professional Psychology in Los Angeles. Her areas of academic emphasis included Women's Studies; Marriage, Child, and Family Therapy; and Multicultural Community Clinical Psychology.

Lyra has provided training and supervision in both agency and private-practice settings. She has been working with individuals and couples at Larchmont Associates since 1998.

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PART 2: Definitional Ceremony & Outsider Witnesses

Sunday 11/10/2019, 1:30 pm – 4:45 pm

Definitional ceremonies deal with the problems of invisibility and marginality; they are strategies that provide opportunities for being seen and in one's own terms, garnering witnesses to one's worth, vitality and being. (Myerhoff 1986)

Michael White wrote the following about Definitional Ceremonies: "The metaphor of definitional ceremony is one that contributes to the structuring of

therapy as a context for the telling and the retelling of the stories of people's lives. There is a specificity to these tellings and retellings that constitute definitional ceremonies - it is not a matter of 'anything goes' .

Maggie Carey and Shona Russell have written about Outsider Witnesses: "Within narrative practice, an outsider witness is an invited audience to a therapy conversation - a third party who is invited to listen to and acknowledge the preferred stories and identity claims of the person consulting the therapist. Outsider witnesses may be part of a person's existing community - family, friends, etc; or they may be invited from outside these networks."

Jill Friedman & Gene Combs wrote: "As Michael White has stated, this process is quite different from pointing out positives. Our intention is to notice unique outcomes and wonder about their significance, not to compete over which team member was most blown away by which incredible event.

The following is a short history of reflecting teams and definitional ceremonies from the writings of David Pare

"Tom Andersen is a Norwegian family therapist, trained in medicine and psychiatry, who coined the term "reflecting team" in 1985. The practice evolved from his experience working in teams with family therapists (1992). Family therapy has a long-standing tradition — originally developed in group clinical supervision settings — of drawing on the input of a range of therapists who observe sessions through a one-way mirror (cf. Selvini-Palazolli, Boscolo, Cecchin, & Prata, 1978; Watzlawick, Weakland, & Fisch, 1974). This combination of live observation and input from a team of therapists can create some remarkably impactful therapeutic experiences for clients.

In a manner typical of these early family therapy traditions, the teams Andersen participated in remained hidden from the clients being interviewed. They acted as expert, neutral observers, who mutually discussed "cases" as they watched from behind the glass, and issued interpretations or homework via the therapist, who would leave the clients briefly to consult with the observing team.

Andersen (1992) says the idea of the reflecting team was germinated in his discomfort with certain aspects of this process. He felt that in announcing to families "This is what we see," he was being disrespectful of client knowledges by suggesting the professionals knew more about them than they knew of themselves. Instead, Andersen began to say "In addition to what you saw, the team saw this" (Ibid., p. 57). He also hatched the idea that it might be useful to share the team's discussions with clients, who might benefit from some additional ideas about how to work through the issues. In effect, he challenged a traditional conception that, as White (1995) put it, "if people know what we are up to in this work then it won't have its desired effect" (p.195).

One of Andersen's concerns in making these discussions public was that the observing therapists tended at times to engage in critical talk — what he describes as "nasty words" — which might be harmful to clients. Instead, he found that when the team's reflections were shared with clients, the tone of the discussions immediately became more respectful and constructive.

He also noticed the language became more accessible and direct —less intellectual, less cluttered with analysis and theoretical terminology.

A shift occurred behind the glass, as well: prior to the open reflecting process, the observing therapists fell silent, saving their thoughts for the clients. This resulted in a greater diversity of points of view emerging, because it prevented the tendency to collectively author a unified story about the clients and their situation.

Andersen's modification of traditional family therapy clinical team processes mirrors the emergence of a range of ideas moving to the forefront of contemporary counselling practice, and often identified with the diverse body of thought known as postmodernism. In highly distilled terms, the development of the reflecting team might be described as the evolution from) a unilateral, monologic, directive, and convergent process founded on a purportedly neutral and objective evaluation of client dynamics, to) a collaborative, dialogic,

nondirective, and divergent process based on a subjectivist, pluralistic view of knowledge.

The practice of reflecting is now common to a wide variety of clinical contexts (cf. Friedman, 1995; White, 1995, 1997).”

Some examples of how definitional ceremonies have been used include work in Perth, Australia, by Ross Hernandez (xx where outsiders cannot be physically present, Work by Sara Strauven and her team in Belgium working with Afghan refugees (xx) and Deidre Ikin’s work with people wishing to make changes to substance misuse. Locally Rocio Ocampo-Giancola has participated in various supervision contexts and consultation groups through Narrative Initiatives San Diego. SCCC in Los Angeles uses reflecting sessions as part of the supervision and training.

Learning Objectives:

1. Articulate 3 theoretical underpinnings of the history of Definitional Ceremonies
2. Know the process and structure of Definitional Ceremonies
3. Demonstrate ability to participate in an Outsider Witness Team

Conversation participants

Rocio Ocampo Giancola, LMFT, is working at McAlister Institute in San Diego. She graduated from San Diego State MFT program in 2006 and has provided services, trainings and supervision in several agencies in the San Diego area. Rocio is the proud mother of Helenita and Lily.

Tristan Scremin is a Painted Brain Contributor. He graduated from Antioch’s MFA program in 2017 and very much enjoys the writing process He plays music and does massage work.

Outsider Witness Team

Lee Conger, LMFT, graduated from Antioch in 1997. He has worked at Kaiser Sunset’s addiction clinic since 2004, where he especially enjoys leading meditation workshops and Qigong sessions.

Lucy Cotter, LMFT, graduated from Pacific Oaks College in 2005, and has an MFA as a painter from Otis College of Art. She has a private practice in Larchmont and teaches in the BA and MA psychology programs at Antioch University.

Charley Lang, LMFT, graduated from Antioch University in 1996. He has a private practice in Larchmont and heads the BA in Psychology program at Antioch.

Dave Leon, LCSW, is the founder of Painted Brain. Tristan invited him to be a member of the Outsider Witness team.

Kevin O'Bryan, AMFT, graduated from the MFT program at USC in 2017. He has been trained at SCCC and is currently an associate with Lynne Rosen.

Caroline Phelps, graduate student at Antioch University, expects to graduate in 2020. They are currently a trainee at The Relational Center. They enjoy hiking, being in nature, and playing with their dogs.

Rob Santos, LMFT, graduated from Phillips Graduate Institute. He has a psychotherapy and sex therapy practice in Larchmont Village.

Target Audience: LMFTs, LCSWs and LPCCs. This workshop is limited to 94 participants and will take place at USC WPH.

Cancellation & grievance policies: For information on Educational Narratives' Cancellation Policy, Grievance Policy, and ADA Compliance, visit www.EducationalNarratives.com

Continuing Education Credit: The workshop meets the requirements for 6 hours of continuing education credit. CEs will be provided by Educational Narratives, a CAMFT APPROVED CONTINUING EDUCATION PROVIDER (#139251).

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Cost: \$60 to attend and an additional \$60 for 6 hours continuing education certificate.