

Transcript from Kelsi Semeschuk's Meet the Author session: *Learnings from Michael White's video archive and some reflections on the practice of 'critique' – May 11th 2021*

This meeting was facilitated by David Denborough and Jill Freedman. It was also skilfully transcribed by Lúcia Helena Abdalla¹.

The meeting started with David Denborough inviting everyone to make acknowledgments in the chat and share their questions. And the first question came from Jill Freedman.

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Jill Freedman: I am particularly interested if you have found examples of how Michael White worked with memory ... it was quite a theoretical paper²...as you said on the video and I am just wondering if you saw him actually work with memories in the way that he was talking about, particularly the way it influenced that sense of self...

Kelsi: Yeah! That is an important question because I went into the research interested in memory because of that paper by Michael White, and also because of my work with people who have experienced childhood sexual abuse and have difficulties with memory... so, I kind of went into the archive the other way, for this topic, of searching out examples of Michael's work on memory (rather than going from the archive to my practice)... and I think it has been a bit hard for me to really locate specific practice examples because that paper on memory by Michael White is so theoretical and I don't... you know, Jill, you would know Michael's practice better... but my sense is that he would not be sharing the theory in his therapy, rather he would be asking questions but there has been lots of examples where he is working with memory ... like for example... One practice story... I'll just be using pseudonyms, and I've changed some of the details of the story to protect the people in the videos but...There is one story where Michael is quite persistent with an uncle who had been accused of perpetrating abuse against his niece. Michael asks all sorts of questions inviting this man to recollect what had happened because the young person (niece) had said that she had been sexual abused by him.... But this man was not owning up to what his niece had accused him of, and Michael never questioned this young person but he also did not make accusations against this man. Instead, he just believed the young girl and he asked this man really interesting questions like, 'Perhaps, you could go for walk on the beach and that might bring up some recollection of what happened?' And he also said 'Sometimes ... some of the men I speak with have a hard time recalling these events ...because they were not quite being themselves at that time...does this fit for you?'. These questions that Michael was asking made me think of Meares³ idea of 'I' 'Me' and 'Myself'⁴ (in regards to 'traumatic memory'). Anyways, it's hard to describe without sharing the whole transcript, but I guess that would be one example where Michael White is quite persistent about triggering off memory and making it more possible and opening space for this man to speak about the abuse and... Jo Allen, one of the women that I

¹ In both English and Portuguese. Thank you, Lúcia Helena Abdalla! ☺

² White, M. (2004). Working with people who are suffering the consequences of multiple trauma: A narrative perspective. *International Journal of Narrative Therapy & Community Work*, 2004(1), 45-76.

³ Russell Meares is a psychiatrist from Sydney that Michael White draws upon in the article mentioned in footnote #1.

⁴ 'According to White, Meares made a unique contribution to the literature on trauma, in the distinction he made between 'I, me, and myself'. In Meares' 'tripartite' conception of personal existence, he argued that these multiple experiences of the self were relational and thus, there existed an 'I-in-relation-to-'Me', and an 'I-in-relation-to-'Myself'...' (Semeschuk, PhD dissertation unpublished, 2021)

work with (my colleague), said she really saw Michael standing beside the young girl and believing her, as she was reading this transcript.... While also refraining from being disrespectful to the man at the same time...so, I think I would like to keep looking more for examples of about memory, but it is not as clear ... if that makes sense, does that answer your question, Jill?

Jill Freedman: Yes, thank you! I hope you keep looking and keeping us informed

David Denborough: Sassy (nickname for Kelsi), before I go on to the next question, I might just ask you to catch people up a bit about what your process has been ... because it's been quite a big task to try and work out how do you engage with Michael White's archive and ... this is being... just to give a bit of a broader picture ... this was quite a dilemma for Cheryl White and for Penny White, who are the custodians the archive, about what to do with these hundreds of videotapes because obviously of most importance was protecting the identities and any issues of confidentiality in relationship to the people who were on the tapes. So, Cheryl very early on consulted with a number of different people including Jill, in the field about what to do ... because one option was simply to destroy all the tapes, as that would be most protecting of people's confidentiality, but there was a very strong sense for many people that a great deal would be lost So, Sassy, I was just wondering if you could say a little bit about what your process has been to take great care in trying to work out ways of bringing forth learnings from Michael's archive and at the same time engaging with the all the ethical considerations that are necessary. You have been on a big journey for many, many years trying to think through how to continue to learn from these tapes... so, would you say something about your process... how you have come to this? Because not everybody would be familiar with that...

Kelsi: I guess yes... that ethical question has been at the centre for me since the beginning... and that sense of not knowing quite what to do with the archive has stayed with me. And I kept thinking, you know: 'What if I was one of the people consulting Michael and some random person from Canada were now watching my session?' So, the ethical considerations were really big for me and we had to do a lot of work ...David Denborough, and I, and Cheryl White, we had to meet with the ethics committee at the University of Melbourne in person and we had to describe how we were going to take care not to centre the stories on the people consulting Michael but rather to focus on Michael's therapeutic practice. We had to be really clear that anything that would be shared with anyone outside of David and myself would be anonymised... so, what I've done is I've written up these 5 mini chapters (or domains – as I'm calling them) based on certain learnings from the video archive and I have included pieces of transcript, but I've changed names and I've done what I can do anonymize the transcripts... And I have also linked these transcripts to my own therapeutic practice, the therapeutic practice of other narrative practitioners, and to the current narrative literature. For example, one of the things I did to conceal the identities of the people in the videos was if one of the videos linked to something that Michael had already written about, I changed the names from that writing (even if Michael had used pseudonyms) so that more links could not be made. Also, when it fit, I've switched the gender at times, I've also changed the relationships (e.g., changed an aunt to a grandmother or a female family friend) and I've

broken up the transcript. And this is only the first part of my research. In the final dissertation, I'm not sure how much of the stories from the people consulting Michael we can actually share, and we also have created a special role for someone to advocate on behalf of the people in the video archive and Michael White. We called this role the: 'Independent Participant Advocate' and Ruth Walter has taken up this role. Ruth knew Michael very well and worked with him from very early on in his career. She also has extensive experience as a Social Worker. So, Ruth has been consulted along the way as the person to speak up for Michael and for the people in the videos. There's so much to the process, David D., I'm not sure what else I might say...?

David Denborough: No, that sounds great. Maybe just a little bit more about your... Because your first step was just to watch all the tapes, wasn't it? Do you just want to take people back through that for a little bit as well, to give them a sense of what this has taken before you've been able to even generate these five different domains. What did that involve first?

Kelsi: Yeah, it's been so hard to find a way to articulate the learnings because there are 300 plus videos of Michael's work, and before I started my PhD, I came over for like three months at a time, six months in total, just watching the archive and trying to... Cheryl and David just wanted to get a sense for what was on the videos and in the video archive, so I sort of catalogued what was on each video. At the time, I was going back and forth between Calgary and Adelaide and was practicing in between. And then, when I started my PhD, I narrowed it down to the theme of working with people who had experienced abuse and trauma, because that was the therapeutic work I was doing in Adelaide at the time, and I really wanted to link the learnings from Michael's archive to current therapeutic practice. For a long time, even until just recently, I didn't know what to do with the learnings from Michael's archive. However, I had a really useful chat with Kristina Lanson (who just completed her PhD!)⁵, who is here today, and I just said... I remember saying: 'I don't know how to share these learnings, because coding the transcripts doesn't feel like it's doing justice to the work... So much of what I've learned from Michael's work is hard to put, I guess, into words. I know that narrative practice is so much about opening up possibilities, and it's about the richness and context, and I thought just putting Michael's work into themes sort of didn't do what I was hoping it would do...' So, I really struggled up against that for a long time, and there were points where I just thought: 'I don't think that there's much I can say that will be helpful'. But just recently, after speaking to Kristina, and lots of chats with David D and Cheryl White has been very very helpful as well... I sort of found a way to split the learnings up into... We're calling them 'domains', so there are five domains – one has to do with memory, and one has to do with not separating emotion from meaning and action, there's one on gender politics... Kristina actually suggested the term 'domain' because we sort of saw it as a way of capturing a broader theme or concept, I guess, and this seemed to enable me to include rich stories from practice, but to also have this organized under some sort of overarching theme. And somehow the word 'domain' just stuck with me... another term Kristina suggested was a 'family of ideas' – which I

⁵ Here is a link to Kristina's outstanding PhD thesis entitled: 'Enduring anorexia: A multi-storied counter document of living and coping with anorexia over time' (Lanson, 2020) <https://minerva-access.unimelb.edu.au/handle/11343/240964>

also like very much. So, I've now written those 5 domains up, and I think I've had about 25 initial focus group meetings in March with narrative practitioners, where I have been sharing these domains and asking them to take any learnings into their practice to see if they're helpful, to see what they think about them, to see if they have any questions/critiques of the ideas, and then we're meeting again in about a month (for the 2nd or follow-up focus group meetings) to hear back about how that process was, so really trying to link learnings to current practice. Yeah, is that a better description?

David Denborough: Fabulous. Fabulous. It gives people a real sense of what you've been doing, but also gives people a sense of this collective process that you've now developed. So, these domains, these careful examinations of the transcripts... You've transformed those into five different domains or families of ideas, and now you're sharing this with groups of practitioners in different places. And some of those practitioners are here, so we might get to hear from them about what their process has been like. But before we do that, Michael sent in a question early. Michael Arcuri, would you like to offer that? And Sassy, I know you've got some questions that came in on Facebook too, so maybe you could respond to one of those?

Kelsi: I don't think I have those.

David Denborough: Oh, you haven't got them? I'll get them. Let's hear from Michael, and I'll get the ones from Facebook.

Michael Acuri: Hi, Kelsi, thank you. In your video, I realize that was quite a while back, you mentioned you were paying special attention to the first ten minutes of some of Michael's interviews to look at what his welcoming practices were, and who he chose to speak with and how he chose to introduce why the family was there. So, I wonder if there's anything from that you could share with us at this point?

Kelsi: Yeah... Yeah, thanks, Michael. I think that is one of the topics that has remained important in my research. I guess it's more about the timing of Michael's work. In reading Michael's work prior to watching him, I got the sense that he jumped right into externalizing. When I would read his practice stories, it's like all of a sudden, change happened, and you'd think: 'I could never do that. How does this change just happen so quickly?'... But I understand that in writing about his work, he would've had to share the bits that show the change, that show the work in action, I guess, but in watching his work... It's slower than how I understood it in reading his work. And I don't mean slower in a negative way – like sometimes, for 20 minutes, it looks like Michael's not doing anything, like he's not doing the 'therapy', but there are these really beautiful conversations that are happening where I get the sense that Michael's genuinely... I know 'getting to know the person' is a very thin description of what he's doing, because he's listening for potential avenues in, but I think... That's been a big learning for me, that I don't always have to rush in to challenge the problematic, dominating story. I'd like to write more about the timing of his work. And hopefully, I can get that across, because it really isn't just getting to know the person or building 'rapport', as we hear in more

mainstream psychology ideas, it's... I really felt like he was getting to know the person. He would talk about going riding in the Adelaide hills, or he would ask a young person about what was on their hat, and then, a rich conversation would come from that. So... Yeah, is that sort of what you were wondering about, Michael?

Michael Acuri: Yes, it is, because he mentions several times in his different books and articles that the transcripts are glossed. Meaning he has taken out the important bits. But like you, I thought: 'I don't know how he gets into this in the first five minutes...?!' Like he was! So thank you. The follow-up question would be: 'How much time did he actually spend with an individual or a family? Did it fit his schedule, or did he just stretch the time that was needed to get that task done?'

Kelsi: Well, Jill and David D might be able to answer that question better, but my understanding is that in a lot of the videos, there's someone buzzing him on the phone in the therapy room... It would've likely been Jane Hales⁶, buzzing him that the next family was there. But it seemed like his sessions went on quite long. I don't think he did that out of disrespect to other people's time, I think he did that out of giving the people the time that they needed. But lots of times, there are buzzes (on the phone) and he's like: 'Okay, I'll be there in five minutes', and the conversation continues. Jill or David D, I don't know if you have more to say about that....?

Jill Freedman: I think you described it really well. That's what I saw. And when he was here doing consultation interviews, we learned to leave at least two hours. He didn't always spend two hours, but sometimes it was more than two hours. That was really great. It's one more discourse about how long you should talk about something, but he instead focused on how long the conversation took.

Kelsi: Yeah. Thanks, Jill.

David Denborough: In the case of those longer scenarios, an hour and a half - two hours, often the outsider witness group was a key part of that. And then, coming in and having part three, when the family would meet with the reflecting team, and then part four, when they would deconstruct what had happened in the conversation. I think those "part fours" haven't been talked about as much as they could be. This is where anyone could then ask Michael why he was doing what he was doing, including the family members or the other outsider witnesses could ask sometimes quite challenging questions, and then, complete transparency with the family in the room so that there's an explanation of what was going on. And I don't see much of that happening in the field these days, and yet, some of those were such incredibly interesting discussions. Anyway, thank you, Michael, for your question, and Jill. I think this might be our first time for a Facebook question. We're moving with the times...! This is a question that's come in from Daria Kutuzova. I don't know if Daria is here, she said she might be able to come. Daria did a lot of work on the

⁶ 'Jane Hales started work in reception at Dulwich Centre on 30 April 1984, and has very much enjoyed her time here being involved with the office work, typesetting and layout of the journals and books, general accounting, workshop and conference organising including travelling to Atlanta and Liverpool for the conferences, database management, managing bookstalls, and more! Currently Jane is working as an assistant to Cheryl White'. From: <https://dulwichcentre.com.au/our-people/>

archives early on, which Kelsi has built upon, and here is Daria's question: 'As you possibly know, I had the privilege of working in Michael's archive several months, from the end of 2009 until the beginning of 2011, and I also had this startling, sparkling revelation that Michael's work as seen on video looks like something so much more, or different, from what we can learn from his texts. I wonder, what is your experience? What, as you so far can see, was left out in the texts, but in fact looks like something that was conducive to therapeutic change? I really enjoyed turning the sound off on the tapes, leaving aside speech and questions and watching the dance of postures, gestures, looks, positioning in space, actions, and such. What is your way of seeing Michael's work differently?'

Kelsi: I didn't realize that this question was from 'the Daria' – who's name I always saw when I looked through the existing archive notes... I've never actually met her, but I am so grateful for all the work she did on Michael's archive prior to the time when I watched it! Yeah, I've spoken about this a bit before, but there's so much, I think, that gets lost, even when I transcribe Michael's work. I think sometimes, some of his questions can come across as more direct and perhaps more harsh than how he said them. There was something about the way, the tentativeness in his voice... Even when he was holding a man to account around practices of abuse, there was this real sense of respect. Yeah, I think the tentativeness is a big piece. I really got the sense that he genuinely didn't... He didn't jump to conclusions about other people's experiences, he was very skilled at not making assumptions. And I think that doesn't come across even in word-for-word transcriptions. Like when I transcribed his work, I tried to keep in the 'hmms' and the 'I don't know's', those words that you might not keep in when you're transcribing. But there was a lot of tentativeness and curiosity that came across in the way that he spoke... so I thought those additional words were important to include.... I also remember Cheryl asking me if I was getting sick of listening to Michael's voice at some point because I was watching a lot of his videos at that time. I said, 'I never get sick of it'. There's something in the way that he asks questions and the way he speaks that I could watch forever... I think that was most of what Daria was asking about?

David Denborough: Okay, thanks. Hopefully, you'll get a chance to meet and chat at some stage. We might go to Zan now, because Zan has been in one of the practitioner focus groups. Sassy has shared with these practitioners some of these domains, some of the areas to chat about. And then, these practitioners got together to discuss them. So Zan, do you have any comments or questions about that experience of being in those practitioner focus groups?

Zan Maeder: Yeah. Hello, hi Kelsi, hi, everyone. I have a kind of a mix of both, because I guess it's probably useful, for other people who haven't been involved, to hear a bit about what that process looked like. To me, it's kind of interesting doing focus groups about this work at all. One of the things I noticed... In the process – Kelsi's already described it a bit – we received a snippet of the transcript. Obviously, she's also spoken about all the ethical considerations that meant we didn't have a lot of information surrounding that transcript. And that's also kind of par for the course with the transcript, isn't it? You're seeing this tiny slice of a relationship, which is quite complex. But then, I noticed that, particularly in the group that I was a part of, there was a real distinction in the experience of reading these transcripts between those practitioners that knew Michael really well and were learning alongside

him, all of these ideas, as opposed to someone like myself, who's really new to narrative ideas. I'm hearing all about Michael's work secondhand. I didn't work or grow up in the same political context, and also, I'm coming to narrative therapy at a time when in some ways, I guess it seems like the ideas are more consolidated, and there's a really strong community, rather than one that's incredibly emergent and fluent. Not to say that that's not still true in other ways. I guess I was wondering, Kelsi, about: What had been your hope in running the focus groups and bringing practitioners in, and seeking out all of these perspectives? What did you find about it that might have been challenging, and what is generative? I had another question about how you are actually going to weave all that together, but maybe that's a question you're still asking yourself. So yeah, I was just wondering about how you imagined going into those focus groups, and then, having done lots of them already, what you're finding... The way that that's going to influence your work moving forward.

Kelsi: Thanks, Zan. Zan has been SO helpful in these focus groups and also just more generally as a colleague and friend...! I think I don't have an answer to the last question. I don't know how I'm going to weave all these ideas together. I guess my hope in having these focus group meetings is that learnings from Michael's archive be shared... From the very beginning, that was my intention. This largely had to do with the fact that I realized that I was in a very privileged position to have been able to watch Michael's work this close up. Michael was a practitioner through and through, and I really wanted to give back to practice in some way – to link these learnings to practice, not to have them as disembodied theoretical ideas. I wanted to align in some ways with what I saw as an ethic from Michael White of always bringing it back to the people who consulted him. The reason that we do this work is for the people who come to see us. Cheryl and David D were really helpful in helping me to put together the list of the practitioners to meet with in these focus group meetings. There are people from all over the world that knew Michael, and some practitioners that didn't. So yeah, I guess the hope there was really linking it to practice, and asking: What do these learnings look like today? Are they helpful? Are the people who are consulting us saying that was a helpful question or idea? So that was the hope. I have found them a bit challenging. As Zan said, there's people from all over, like Israel, Canada, Turkey... Some people are really well-known teachers, other people are practitioners. There was some critique of the transcripts that I shared, which I really appreciated – I think it's important that we engage with critique over Michael's work, but at times, I also had the sense that I had spent three plus years really trying to pick these transcripts, because I thought they were significant, and there were some responses to the transcripts that I was surprised by. I realized that a lot of the transcripts that I included were from Michael's really early work. For me... I'm more acquainted with his later writings, and that's sort of the narrative practice that I learned. But I really liked his earlier videotapes, because as Jill Freedman has mentioned to me... In some ways, the ideas and the politics are clearer to me in the early tapes. I imagine that's because he was trying out ideas or perhaps some other reasons...? Cheryl White has been really helpful in speaking to the broader sociopolitical context in Australia at the time that these videos were recorded. This has been an important learning for me, because in some of the earlier videos, some practitioners were saying: 'Michael is more centered, in terms of influential but decentered, than I remember him being', or 'That doesn't quite fit with how I saw Michael's work'. But Cheryl had really interesting and helpful reflections on the broader political context of the time. For example, in many of those earlier videos, Cheryl

explained that Michael was very much influenced by the feminist liberation movement at the time that Cheryl was very active in at the time, and the anti-Vietnam war protests. And Cheryl saw that centeredness as being quite politically radical and necessary at the time.... That is, for Michael to believe the young child who spoke out about the abuse, could be seen as a political act of standing up to dominant ideas at the which often led to many survivors of sexual abuse not being believed⁷. So, when it was located in that broader context, I think... I guess I may be going off track here, but I'm learning a lot about the context in which these conversations (as captured in Michael's video archive) took place, and I'm hoping to interweave that more into my research by interviewing people like Cheryl. I'd love to interview Joan Hollenberg as well, because Joan, I know you did a lot... Joan Hollenberg and Deborah Roth⁸, from Calgary, did a lot for the Women's Liberation Movement in North America. As Zan said, I wasn't around when Michael was doing this work. So that's been an interesting piece from the focus groups. Zan, is that okay?

Zan Maeder: Yeah.

David Denborough: Thank you Zan, thank you, Sassy. Jill, we might turn to you for the next question, and then we're going to go to Joseph Kalisa, who is up very late in Rwanda. So, we'll go to Joseph after this question from Jill. Thank you...

Jill Freedman: I want to turn to the paper that you wrote, Kelsi⁹. I was really interested in respect and critique together. Part of the reason I was interested in that is that so many people that I've been working with in therapy - I think because of the political context in the United States has really taken over the public interest - more people are involved in thinking about racism, particularly. Because of that, I think there's more conversation about where people stand, and more people feel alienated. They speak out because they care about something, and then, people feel like they've alienated everyone. So, I was really interested in this idea of respectful critique, and I'm wondering if you have brought that into conversations that you're having, both in your practice and in your life, and if you could say something about what you've learned, about ways of keeping that in mind, being able to critique, but in a way that's still respecting of the person....? I know that externalizing would make a difference with that, but I'm wondering if there are other things that you've learned by focusing on this.

Kelsi: I think that's such an important question to consider right now, Jill. I know there are probably many people in this meeting that are more informed about this in terms of the current political situation. But I guess for myself... Yeah, this idea of critique... Prior to learning about narrative practice, I always viewed critique as attack, and as a

⁷ For more information on this topic, this article might be interesting to you: Azzopardi, C., Alaggia, R., & Fallon, B. (2018). From Freud to feminism: Gendered constructions of blame across theories of child sexual abuse. *Journal of Child sexual abuse*, 27(3), 254-275.

⁸ In 1987, Joan Hollenberg and Deborah Roth founded the **Calgary Women's Health Collective**. It was created in response to the growing need identified by women in the community who were seeking counsellors who could understand the experiences of women.

⁹ Semeschuk, K. (2019). Refusing to separate critique from respect. *International Journal of Narrative Therapy & Community Work*, (3), 9.

disagreement. Maybe that has something to do with me growing up as a competitive gymnast, where you just did what you were told. That was part of taking corrections, really respecting authority, I guess. That was sort of trained into me. So, critique has been something that I haven't grown up with really. But I've learned so much about it from being in Adelaide and being engaged with narrative practice. I've learned a lot, especially from Cheryl White, about critique. For example, just the other day, Cheryl asked me if early on in our meetings, if I experienced her critique of me (e.g., when she would tell me suggestions about how I might do things differently), if I experienced that in a negative way? And I said that I did at the time. I found it really confronting and difficult. I hope Cheryl doesn't mind me saying this, but she said it's been a big learning for her in some ways, because for her – she learned in consciousness-raising groups, that critique was a form of respect. Those were two and the same, so she still sees critique, or always looking for how we might do better, as actually the kindest thing you can do for someone. That was just a very recent conversation, and that's completely shifted my understandings around critique. Cheryl said that in those consciousness-raising groups they often didn't even know each other's names, because what was so important at the time was supporting each other to stand up to whatever they were trying to do, whether it was speaking to a boss or to take a stand on an injustice... And afterwards, they would all come back and meet together, and maybe point out ways that they could've done it differently... or done it better. So, I think I'm learning a lot about critique. I'm not sure how it's showing up in my life now. I guess maybe it's more that I'm seeing critique not as an attack. I'm seeing it as a way of generating ideas, a way of being supportive, a way of growing in your practice and... There's just one more thought that I have to say about that. I remember David D and Cheryl White telling me that when Michael White would teach in Israel, that their academic style was very much about critiquing or questioning the teacher. Michael was quite nervous about that at the beginning, really taken aback. I think that's interesting, in a different culture, that's really seen as... How you show your academic interest, that's how you show respect – through a lens of critique. So, for me, I'm trying to figure out how to critique people while also not losing those relationships, because those are the relationships that have taught me what I know now. Does that make sense, Jill?

Jill Freedman: Yeah, and it's a really interesting topic. I'd love to hear more about how you witnessed Michael doing that. And I was thinking, when I was reading your paper, that perhaps it was something in some of the conversations after the therapeutic meetings or in his teaching videos, not the therapy... I'm sure it shows up in therapy, but I was also thinking that he probably talked about some of the teaching that he was doing.

Kelsi: Yeah. I think my understanding was that Michael wouldn't let comments pass that didn't fit with his perspective. It seemed to me that he would speak up if something didn't fit. Jill and David D, once again, you'd know more about that, but it does show up in his teaching. He's pretty clear about his perspective, and about distinguishing the nuances of his practice, if it's being misinterpreted or something...

Jill Freedman: Thanks.

Kelsi: Thanks, Jill.

David Denborough: Thanks, Jill, thanks, Sassy. We're going to go to Joseph. I think it's two o'clock in the morning or something like that in Rwanda. Is that right, Jo? Thank you for joining us, and we'd love to hear your question or comment.

Joseph Kalisa: Thank you, David. Yeah, I had one question with A, B, and C, but Jill has asked A and B.

Jill Freedman: Good teamwork!

Joseph Kalisa: Yeah... I just wanted to acknowledge, when I was reading the 'meet the author' announcement, I was getting envious about you being able to look at all those videos that were made by Michael White. My other question was: When you looked at those videos, trying to link them to current practitioners, I think when Michael was writing, they were using those old, traditional ways, where issues of confidentiality was a bit easier to manage. And I was trying to think, when you look at now, at us, when we're doing video recordings, sharing things sometimes on Google Drive, what would be your view on video recording them and video recording now in therapy sessions? Are there some things you have learned from that, that you think you can be mindful of as you are making those video recordings? Because one of the things I'm very much scared about is privacy and things linking up nowadays, and you don't have much control of what is up, and then, it's out.

Kelsi: Yeah. Thanks, Jo. Thanks for being awake as well! I don't know, I think that's a bit of a hard question. There are lots of protections around Michael's videos. They only stay at Dulwich, in a locked cupboard, in a locked room. I only watch the videos when I'm there, the transcripts are very much protected. But yeah, in terms of things like Google Drive and sharing videos in that way... I'm not really sure if I have much to say about that. I think there are definitely risks. I don't know a lot about technology and what protections are in place. I haven't shared the videos of Michael's work and they haven't left Dulwich.... but I guess I have done a lot of thinking around confidentiality and weighing up... you know, speaking about Michael's work, and the risk of sharing anything about that video archive and the people who are in it, and the benefit of these learnings, and of how brilliant Michael was, how skilled he was. I have done a lot of thinking about that, I've done a lot of writing about the ethical considerations around that. There have been some interesting writings by mostly feminist archivists who've written about the ethics of representation when you go back and research into history. So, Jo, I don't know if I really answered that question. I don't know if David D, Jill, or anyone else...?

David Denborough: You gave it a good go, I reckon. You gave it a good go. There's a question from Jocelyn. She put it in private chat, but it's a very interesting question, so perhaps we can hear it.

Jocelyn Carter: Hi, Kelsi, hi, everyone. I was just curious, because what I enjoy about narrative practices is what it makes visible. And it's really aligned well, as you know, in the Indigenous child welfare area that I work in, in Calgary. So, you mentioned the domains, and I'm wondering whether there is a space or place within your research, or adding another domain, that could represent the people that you're trying to protect in the videos, as some form of acknowledging their presence...? Making it visible, but also balancing the confidentiality around that. Or maybe it's a future space in which if ever there is time in the future. Could people be consulted who may still be alive, and that you may be able to track down, that would like to contribute to this ongoing story? And yes, we do need a story about the history of the Women's Health Collective here in Calgary.

Kelsi: Yeah, thanks, Jocelyn. That's actually really interesting. When I first started my research, I had asked if there were ways that we could contact the people in the videos, try to get some of their consent, but in consulting with John McLeod¹⁰ and his writings on research in counselling and psychotherapy, we realized that contacting people could potentially be quite complex on multiple levels. For example, John McLeod writes about the risks of recontacting people (clients) after they have disengaged from therapy. This seemed especially relevant for Michael White's archive as some of these videos are from the 1980s, and some of the people consulting Michael might not even be aware that he has even passed away, so there was a decision not to do that. And we don't have addresses or full names of most of the people in the videos. But I do wish that some of the people in the videos could be included in the research, because I think that would be really important and it would be more aligned with my ethics. But maybe there is a way, as you said, like including another domain that acknowledges their contributions. Because it's interesting that there are so many things that people are saying to Michael, like one woman who talks about 'justice and healing', and the importance of justice in that role. And then, reading Michael's work and finding how he's written about that. So, the people who were coming to see him were making immense contributions to his development of narrative practice, and I think he'd be the first person to acknowledge that. Yeah, I think you've given me another idea, Jocelyn ... I'm not sure how we can do it while respecting their confidentiality, but I do think there should be a big piece on acknowledging their contribution. Was that all of your question, or was there another piece to that, that I missed?

Jocelyn Carter: Yeah, I was just going back to our block week course (from the Masters in Narrative Therapy and Community Work), some of our learnings, like when Joseph Kalisa was talking about bringing a chair into the room in Rwanda, when I talk a lot about sitting in circles and inviting in ancestors to be with us, and their presence. I'm wondering what a decolonized way might look like of including an acknowledgement, rather than a lot of papers that we see at the beginning, when we do the Western acknowledgements. I don't know what the answer is, but it just came to me when you were talking about all these different domains. It's lovely.

¹⁰ John McLeod has held appointments in universities in the UK, New Zealand and Italy, and is currently Professor of Counselling at the Institute for Integrative Counselling and Psychotherapy, Dublin, and Professor of Psychology, University of Oslo. He is committed to promoting the relevance of research as a means of informing therapy practice and improving the quality of services that are available to clients, and has received an award from the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy for his exceptional contribution to research. His writing has influenced a generation of trainees in the field of counselling, counselling psychology and psychotherapy, and his books are widely adopted on training programmes across the world.

David Denborough: Thanks, Jocelyn. As Sassy was saying, it's quite a complex scenario, contacting people from many years ago to invite recollection, but in some contexts, it's been possible. There was one woman called Chris. She was interviewed by Michael many years ago, who was part of the Silent Too Long¹¹ women's group, women survivors of child sexual abuse. After Michael died, she was very happy to come back and be interviewed along with Jussey Verco¹², the facilitator of that group. And because they also used narrative practices within their group, Chris was not only a participant in the group, she was also very, very knowledgeable about narrative practice, and rites of passage, and gave quite profound commentary in relation to her experience of narrative practices within the Silent Too Long group, but also then looked back at the video recording that is within the archive, and was re-interviewed about that. So, where that's possible, I completely agree with you that this is invaluable. It's just they're very rare circumstances. It might be that Jill Freedman and others who hosted Michael might know of people who would be open to that, but I certainly agree with you that it's a great possibility, where it's going to be a good experience for everybody. Anton has written a very interesting comment in the chat. Anton, would you be happy to read that to us?

Anton Sevilla-Lui: Hi, everyone. Nice to see you all again, and thank you very much. I was very interested in the problem of critique. As you know, with the US and the problems with politics, conversation is really becoming difficult. And I think it's a time where we're all trying to really greatly transform the way we see the world, and it's a pity that democracy is doing so poorly. Critique also has other problems in Japan, so I'm very, very interested in what you're saying about how to critique, and how to do that respectfully, and how to do that in a way that respects people not just as fellow combatants in the democratic arena, but a sort of narrative respect toward people. But I was wondering what brought up connecting something like democracy, Chantal Mouffe¹³ – which is more of an everyday relationship – versus narrative-therapeutic relationships, or even relationships between therapists, which can be... I wouldn't automatically associate those two, but I think it's very interesting, very brilliant that you connected them. But I was wondering what was behind that?

Kelsi: Yeah. Thanks, Anton. I was rereading that article, because I wrote it a little while ago, so it's not as close to me as it once was. In preparation for this meeting today, I decided to watch some of Chantal Mouffe's lectures on YouTube last night, because I find her perspective really, really interesting, but I also find it complex and hard to grasp, as I'm not very well-versed in her arena of political theory. I'm not sure where I came across her writings. Sometimes I read articles, then I look at the references, and I look up those references, and I must have just come

¹¹ Silent Too Long was an action-based group of women survivors of childhood sexual abuse that took place in Adelaide, SA starting in the 1990s. The Silent Too Long members noted that: 'We believe that it is time for this culture to be making a stand against childhood sexual abuse. There are many ways in which we as women are doing this - by reclaiming our lives from the effects of abuse, by speaking out, by creating places for other women to talk, by presenting at conferences, by creating our own newsletter, by supporting each other, by protecting our children and loved ones' (2001). From: Silent Too Long (2001). Trust. In Dulwich Centre Publications (Ed.), *Working with the stories of women's lives* (pp. 85–82). Adelaide, Australia: Dulwich Centre Publications.

¹² Jussey Verco currently works as the Statewide Senior Educator at Domestic Violence Routine Screening & Child Protection NSW Health Education Centre Against Violence

¹³ Mouffe, C. (2000). *Deliberative democracy or agonistic pluralism*.

across Chantal Mouffe's work. She's brilliant, I think she's from Belgium. I really cannot remember how I came across her work, but if you're interested, you should watch her YouTube videos or read one of her articles, because she talked about the importance... I don't know if I can do her work justice, this might be really off, but my understanding is that she's suggesting that to disagree is actually a good thing, that's part of democracy. It's not about us all doing things in the same way or agreeing, but it's about that pluralism, and finding ways to speak across difference. So, she writes about critiquing, but also acknowledging and fighting for that person's right to talk back to you. I think that's what I connected with in her writings. That might not be an accurate understanding of what she's saying, but that was my understanding. So, Anton, if you haven't, I could always send you some of her articles. They're pretty easy to find. She really talks about the importance of not making generalizations across.... You know, universalities. She talks about the difference of considering democracy in North America versus somewhere like in the Middle East, where there's been a very different history. So, I don't know, I think... Maybe from learning from Michael White, sometimes I really find connections to narrative ideas in the least likely, most unexpected places, and I find that kind of interesting. Maybe it's part of me procrastinating when I'm writing. I go 'that's interesting', and I go down a black hole, and somehow, I'm writing about political theory, going off-track. David D often brings me back on track...!

Anton Sevilla-Lui: I'm sorry, just a quick follow-up. Right now, you're talking about how, in a sense, the narrative stuff connects to how you're looking at democracy and our relationship, but in a sense, do you also see critique as something that happens? Well, it definitely happens between therapists, but in a sense, what's a narrative spirit that you find in the critique that happens between colleagues, as we learn to listen to people better? Also, do you see any place for critique within the therapeutic relationship?

Kelsi: Well, between colleagues... I know this is something that Cheryl and David D have been looking into a lot. There's a podcast interview with Sarah Strauven¹⁴ and Mary Heath¹⁵ about critique that's really interesting... But, I'm not sure exactly what critique looks like in the narrative field. It's just, I guess, as I said before, something I'm really curious about because it's strange to me. It's strange that we can critique and still all have such similar underpinning values that narrative practice brings with it (i.e., the strong and richly described philosophical underpinnings of narrative practice). I'm not sure if I have a lot to say about that. I guess within the therapeutic conversation, I've never really thought about critique in that way. Perhaps deconstruction is a form of critique. I would never critique a person coming to see me...I don't think. But I would invite deconstruction of beliefs that are maybe being harmful to their sense of self. But that's a really interesting question. I don't know if Jill or David D have anything to say about that? Thanks, Anton.

¹⁴ Sarah Strauven is currently in the final weeks of her PhD, entitled: 'People with and without refugee experience co-creating a shared world through narrative practices'. Previously, Sarah worked with asylum seekers and refugees as a clinical psychologist and narrative therapist for 10 years in a Belgian reception centre. She has a particular interest for the intersections of (forced) migration, mental health, trauma, human rights and ethics.

¹⁵ You can listen to this discussion between Mary Heath and Sarah Strauven via this link on the Dulwich Centre website: <https://vimeo.com/568715514>

Anton Sevilla-Lui: No, thank you very much. It's very interesting, I want to think about it too.

David Denborough: It's a great conversation, and one I think the field needs to think about more. I think your paper, Sassy, and other people's contributions to think about how critique can be done in generative and respectful ways within the field of narrative therapy and community work is something we need to be looking at more. So, I appreciate the conversations. We're coming to a close, so I'm going to hand over to Jill Freedman for... if not a last question, then some reflections as to this meeting that we've had, which has been terrific! Over to you, Jill!

Jill Freedman: You know, I think that many of us really envy the hours and weeks, and months, and years you've spent in the archive, Kelsi. And I feel... I think it's so fantastic, the way that you're sharing those experiences, both through the way that you're doing your research, having groups of people talking about things, and in the way that you're having this conversation. If I were going to ask you a question, it would be a question that would take hours, I'm sure, to answer, which is: 'How has this transported you, this work that you're doing?' And I know it's gone in so many different directions. I just wanted to talk about one thing I was thinking about while you were talking. There are so many things, I'm just sort of picking one, and that is... One of the things that often happens with ways of doing therapy is they're frozen. You know, they're exactly the same. And one of the things that I appreciated about narrative therapy is that it's changed over time. And you really highlight it by talking about the difference between Michael's early work and his later work. It changed. And I think that through this spirit of critique and this sharing that you're doing, it is continuing to change. I just really want to thank you for your contribution. I think you're really contributing to that, both by the way that you're doing your research – including so many people and sharing it – and having this conversation and other conversations like it. It's really transporting for me, and I appreciate it very much.

Kelsi: Thank you, Jill. You've been there along the way helping me so much as well, so thank you.

David Denborough: I just wanted to also thank everybody who came today. And I had an idea, Sassy, I don't know if you'll like it or not, but we have everybody's emails, because people registered for this meeting. Everyone on this call is obviously very interested in Michael's archive and your engagement with it. So, when you have something, a draft, something from your research – I don't mean the whole thing, because that's going to be quite large – but something that you're interested in getting feedback on, perhaps we could ask this group? And critique of... Perhaps this is a group that we could write out to. What do you think? I'm just asking if anyone on this call would be interested in reading and responding to that draft. How does that sound? Seems like we've got a few hands there. This could actually turn into a broader collective as part of your research, Sassy, so good work, really nice. Thank you so much, Sassy, for all your dedicated hard work to this and the ethic that you bring to it, and thank you, everyone, for joining. Thank you in particular to the Calgary crew who have called in to be here with Sassy today. Very, very nice indeed, and people from all over the world. Thinking of those in India, in Brazil and in other places

particularly struggling with COVID at this time and look forward to staying in touch. Thank you, Sassy, very, very much indeed [...]