

‘@emmyzen liked your tweet!’ (and other stories): The antidote to case studies

Deborah A. Lee *

Peer reviewed article, received 08/11/2017, accepted 02/02/2018

Abstract

‘Narrative, whatever its medium...holds the interest of an audience by raising questions in their minds, and *delaying the answers*’ (Lodge, 2011, p. 14, italics added); and ‘academic style’ can stand accused of ‘*stifling* a plurality of creative styles and voices’ (Heuer and Tudor, 2017, p. 7, italics added). So...while this abstract reveals some of the existentially informed, person-centred psychotherapy case study which follows, I’m also holding engagement with, enjoyment of, the unexpected; a desire for creative unfolding – perfectly acceptable in person-centred, existentially informed psychotherapy itself! I *will* say: this isn’t a case study of Deurzen’s existentialism (or that of others), nor is it an analysis of Deurzen’s tweets. Instead, it is an exploration of something *visceral* – an embodied encounter with selected aspects of Deurzen (2015) and the impact of this upon some established therapeutic relating. The paper seeks to contribute to the politics of writing psychotherapy: Du Plock (1997, p. 6) deplores case study clients being encapsulated ‘in a handful in printed pages’ and McLeod (2010, p. 28) claims it’s a ‘general principle’ for case studies to have ‘a standard format’; what happens when both the content and form of the case study are disrupted...?

Key words: *Person-centred, existentially informed, psychotherapy case study, arts-based presentation, therapist self-disclosure, politics of writing psychotherapy*

Participants

Deborah Lee (a psychotherapist-in-training); Kate Smith (a client; self-chosen pseudonym); and my clinical supervisor.

and bereft and sorrowing, whilst still desiring to stretch out once more. Passion is what leads us to improve ourselves and reach for something greater than what we have known before or what we are’ (Deurzen, 2015, p. 93).

Words for contemplation

‘Passion is not about heroism or success. It is our capacity for being low and slow, bad and deficient,

And now on BBC Radio 4, *Round Britain Quiz...*

Imaginary listener: Shouldn’t that be ‘I’m Sorry I

Haven't a Clue'?

Deurzen (2015, p. 34) smiles: 'Perfection, no matter how desirable, is nothing but death'.

Host: What links the Mary Celeste...

The motto of the UK's Magic Circle...

A child who speaks up...

And the Sargasso Sea?

Contestant: Jean Rhys? [No.]

Hmm, the Magic Circle's (2016, p. 1) motto is 'Indocilis Privata Loqui' ('not apt to disclose secrets').

And there's the Hans Christian Anderson story, where the townsfolk don't say that the Emperor is wearing no clothes, but a child does.

Would psychotherapy help here? [Yes.]

It's the case study!

Like the Mary Celeste, it has cargo, but no crew – Du Plock (1997, p. 1) says that the person vanishes, only their issues remain.

Psychotherapists know this; yet they stay silent, following the rules to stay in their own magic circle.

And the Sargasso Sea – it's the only sea not boundaried by land? [Yes, 'it's the world's only sea without coasts...bounded on all sides by the clockwise flow of major ocean currents...just as the currents vary, [its] boundaries...also vary' (Freestone and Morrison, 2012, p. 647)].

Oh, it's a challenge – for psychotherapists to look beyond McLeod's (2010) book on case studies, and write differently!

...Reading this, my supervisor laughs.

Smith (2015, p. 561) talks of 'comedy's potential to invite people to think differently about the established order'.

Lafreniere and Cox (2012, p. 322) say that arts-based work: 'must skilfully feature some literary performing of visual techniques'.

...And yet – 'to be fully functioning is to be creative' (Rogers et al., 2012, p. 35).

My vignette languished awhile on the cutting-room

floor.

Was it *skilful*?

Was my supervisor being *kind*?

'We only ever improve by immersing ourselves...' encourages Deurzen (2015, p. 2). So here's...

Joined-up writing

I'm a little girl who loves telling jokes and laughing at serious people (especially in the deadly quiet doctor's surgery).

I'm going to a new school. There are indoor and outdoor shoes to buy, mortar board and cape, boater and white gloves.

Children spit at me in the street.

I finally learn to read fluently, and to write with a fountain pen (my fingers are always inky).

But my *exuberance* doesn't travel.

Quickly, I learn how to be a young lady, quiet and clever.

I start biting my nails.

Writing for psychotherapy training helped me rediscover some of the energy dampened down at school – although you're the judge of whether it works for you, 'there is little or no agreement as of yet on how arts-based research should be assessed' say Lafreniere and Cox [2012, p. 320] - despite their own attempts...).

Cardell and Kuttainen (2012) discuss David Sedaris, an autobiographical humourist. I listened to Sedaris (2004, 2013) during an impasse phase in this work (more on that later), and I sought to channel him a little above.

My connection with Sedaris feels consistent with psychotherapy. Cardell and Kuttainen (2012, p. 112) observe of autobiography that: 'between the teller and [their] audience is an affirmation of cohesion'. Similarly, Deurzen (2015, p. 9) feels that therapy 'works best when the human interaction is active, uses feedback and mutuality, and is honest and direct'.

Clark (2017, p. 1) reports that 'Sedaris...makes

adjustments based on the experience of reading aloud'; I've imagined some Reader's Theatre: 'an ongoing dialogue...in which individual, institutional and even societal narratives are discussed, critiqued and co-created' (Willis et al., 2014, p. 526).

Readers' theatre

Listener: Where's your assessment of your client/her presenting problems? If you're planning to talk any more about yourself, note Finlay's (2002, p. 532) warning that: 'taking the threatening path of personal disclosure, the researcher treads a cliff edge where it is all too easy to fall into an infinite regress of excessive self-analysis at the expense of focusing on the research participants'.

Deborah: 'Infinite regress'?! Well, you *can* write about yourself: Sussman (2007, p. 177) says that: 'the therapist's motivations and gratifications can be likened to the client's presenting problems. These are what initially impel each participant to engage in the therapeutic interaction! ...But even this creates a linguistic separation of client and therapist; we have 'motivations and gratifications', they have 'problems'. So - I'm in the spotlight here; this is an exploration of my 'wholeness' (Tudor and Merry, 2002, p. 29): Natiello (1999, p. 167) calls such learning 'the most important part' of training. Prizing such 'self-knowledge' (British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy [BACP], 2016, p. 6) feels an ethical basis for writing about therapy encounters. I'm implying some of *my* conditions of worth ('the value of oneself from the (usually negative) evaluations of significant others in childhood'); I experienced disruption of identity/belonging distorted into anxiety. Like Natiello (1999, p. 165), I've described 'gendered conditions of worth' (Proctor, 2004, p. 132), 'becoming' a young lady.

Listener: Is what you're describing current?

Deborah: The self 'is fluid, not fixed, and constantly changing in the light of new experiences' (Tudor and Worrall, 2006, p. 107); and '...there remains in individuals a constant internal sense that they are still the same person at any given moment' (Tudor

and Worrall, 2006, p. 107). I'm certainly regaining a penchant for daring, *and* I still often question myself: 'as a result of introjected ideas...we may find ourselves torn between conscious desires or prohibitions on the one hand, and organismic promptings on the other' (Tudor and Worrall, 2006, p. 88).

Listener: ...Ok, but does any of that relate to your client, Kate?

Deborah: It's the ground for meeting Kate; how could it not be?

Listener: 'Working as a therapist...comes [with] a profound responsibility to know ourselves as much as we hope to know others' (Adams, 2014, p. 17); but 'all researchers...are expected to have given careful consideration to risks arising from the research' (BACP, 2004, p. 5) – are there risks for Kate here?

Deborah: I'm disclosing lived experience, rather than the more usual type of self-disclosure – therapy room feelings (Bager-Charleson, 2010, p. 133). It's certainly possible to read the subtitle of Ziv-Beiman and Shahar's (2016) article in *scare-capitals*, that self-disclosure can be 'A CLINICAL ERROR'. I'm increasingly open, though, to unintentionally getting it wrong, seeing where that takes us. Overall, I connect with BACP's (2016, p. 7) point that: 'a decision or course of action does not necessarily become unethical merely because it is controversial'. There's a precedent, too, in Tickle and Murphy (2014, p. 348): Tickle shares 'overlapping biographical details' with her client, who says it's 'empowering'.

Listener: And, you know, research has in common with therapy that: 'whatever the regulators say, therapy is an intrinsically risky undertaking, which cannot be made wholly safe if it is to be effective' (Totton, 2015, p. 117).

'...the final word is never said' (Cardell and Kuttainen, 2012, p. 106).

To some, that I haven't assessed Kate (even if I'm the focus, the piece draws upon our relating) will appear 'irresponsible...slap-dash' (Wilkins, 2005,

p. 133). I contend that if we assess ourselves (as I have done above), and reflect upon how that may feel (for me, exposing), we may be less keen to assess others. I can keep editing; a client cannot. Wilkins (2005, p. 141) conceptualizes assessment as: 'therapists reach[ing] some conclusion as to the possibility or likelihood of effective working'. Even this troubles me: I tend to the view that it is the client who assesses whether they wish to meet; in person-centred practice, client perception is 'the condition by which the process of therapy stands or falls' (Tudor and Worrall, 2006, p. 208). The first extract below elaborates my view of person-centred assessment. Then we twice revisit similar material – much as Sedaris revisits his own life: 'allowing subtle shifts in perspective and point of view...' (Cardell and Kuttainen, 2012, p. 106).

1/ Kate makes an assessment (session 35)

(... indicates that words have been removed; the integrity of the material remains.)

Deborah: [I am leaving the placement where we meet] ...It feels awful for me to say it. [Listening again, I re-experienced the terror of letting Kate down: 'women learn that others' needs supersede their own' (Natiello, 1999, p. 168).] ...

Kate: Yeah. It's a shock. ...Will you be carrying on your counselling somewhere else?

Deborah: I will.

Kate: You will.

Deborah: I also have a placement [here]. ...

Kate: ... And perchance if I wanted to follow you there [Kate laughs] would I need to speak to them?

2/ Kate makes an assessment – revisited (session 76)

Kate: ...I guess, the bit that touched me the most is... where you were talking to me in the piece [Kate read the annotated transcript above] about [feelings on leaving the placement] ... I really related to it. Just kind of that thing about being more bothered about other people and the effect it's going to have on

other people. It is interesting, that idea of a forced ending, and how it wasn't, it wasn't ended. But I decided to keep it going. I don't know how you feel about that?! [Kate laughs].

Deborah: I thought it was great. I couldn't tell you, obviously, that I wanted you to come.

3/ My supervisor reflects – and Kate and I revisit again (session 79)

Supervisor [to Deborah, after reading the transcript above]: ... Are you both talking around the depth of the relationship without naming it?

Deborah (to Kate, in the session): ...when I told you [about a practical matter] ... at the end last time, you were moving back in a professional way...

Kate: ...There's part of me that's kind of wanted to know more, but then it's not my [intake of breath] place to know more, it's my place to be a *client!* ... I didn't like that as soon as I said it! ... I guess it's because part of this is receiving, on one level, some service, some kind of service, mm, but then what we do in here is very different to that... you can't replace this. ...

These extracts show Kate and me engaging in what I see as processes of metatherapeutic communication (MTC) (Papayianni and Cooper, 2017), which I feel is enabled by mutuality (Tickle and Murphy, 2014), and which, like Sedaris' work (Cardell and Kuttainen, 2012, p. 106), unfolds.

Papayianni and Cooper (2017, p. 1) define MTC as 'dialogue between therapists and clients on the nature of the therapeutic work and the means by which it can be of greatest help to clients'; and Tickle and Murphy (2014, p. 339) say that: 'mutuality... involves both client and therapist encountering each other where both experience congruently, to varying degrees, unconditional acceptance and empathy'.

Unlike in Papayianni and Cooper (2017), MTC is never instigated here by Kate's material/goals; it is a different MTC. In the first extract, MTC is instigated by my needing to tell Kate I'm leaving, Kate's 'and perchance if I wanted to follow you there' suggests

the meaning/stage of the relationship –our relating is congruently valued (by both of us) and it is not our time for ending. Then, after Kate agreed to read material for this piece, I began MTC by sharing my earlier feelings. Tickle and Murphy (2014, p. 343) observe that: ‘for mutual empathy to develop, first the client needs to be aware of the impact they have on the other person’. When Kate hears my experiencing, mutuality is apparent: ‘I really related to it’. The final MTC is prompted by my supervisor’s hunch about what isn’t being said explicitly. Through talking about a practical matter, Kate and I uncover the impact of the unequal nature of therapy (see Proctor, 2004). But Kate also says: ‘I didn’t like that as soon as I said it’. (To be continued...).

What does a therapist do?

‘Their predicament is always mine,
in some form
or shape.
It either already has been mine,
is now,
or will be in the future’
(Deurzen, 2015, p. 74).

The shared may be
unspoken;
But it’s always
‘Buber’s ‘I/Thou’.
We’re ALL ‘trustworthy organisms’ (Rogers, 1978, p. 7).

Then writing calls.
A case study.
‘Buber’s ‘I/It’ slinks from the shadows,
clutching an assessment
and some interventions.
Was it always there?
The ‘process conception’
(Barrett-Lennard, 1998, p. 82).

Are they a ‘good outcome client’
(Watson and Watson, 2010, p. 169)
or not?

All cannot have prizes.
And yet, apparently,
all were prized.

‘Sonia was a 44-year-old,
morbidly obese woman
...unable to manage her son,
her own basic needs,
and her financial situation’
(Scherb, 2014, p. 2).

At the end of the treatment,
‘Sonia’s’ ‘gains’
include
‘an appropriate weight’
(Scherb, 2014, p. 25).

Alternatively:
‘Sonia’
experiences
the ‘psychiatric imperialism’
(Chesler, 2005, p. 1)
of case studies.
An ‘appropriate weight’ for whom?

‘...it’s my place to be a client!
...I didn’t like that as soon as I said it!’

Let’s not like it.
‘We must let go
if we want
to approach’
‘...to say

'Here I am'
is
all
that
we
have
to
do'

(Schmid, 2006, p. 242 & p. 251).

Bolton (1999, p. 118) says that: 'the creation of poetry can be...intensely healing'. Starting the poem above, I felt disheartened with injustice. But I returned to the work numerous times, with increasing clarity that case studies can disrupt person-centredness, that the Emperor is (currently) naked. As Bolton (1999, p. 120) says, 'reworking [poetry] can bring insight and consolidation'.

'@emmyzen liked your Tweet!' (and other stories)

At the time of starting this work, I was feeling very creative, hardly noticing that work was work...

1/ ...I'm actually enjoying the levels of stress... It's like a whirlwind. Everything's going at a thousand miles an hour. It's really difficult for me to say 'actually, no, I can't do that' ... I'm really quite enjoying being so out of control with it.

2/ My book of research/writing ideas is overflowing. ...My work on the case study is different. My usual approach to books is to read quickly. ... I'm conscious, with Deurzen (2015), of really connecting with what is being said about slowing down (Deurzen, 2015, p. 54). Yet I'm also sometimes too excited to even settle to reading (even slow is too fast). Sometimes I'm playing with Twitter. Deurzen likes your tweets; and people who like her like your tweets!

1 is an extract from session 72, with Kate speaking – although you might have thought that it was me, as it followed neatly from what I'd just said.... 2 is an extract from my personal journal. Kate and I are expressing some of our responses to the existential question: 'how can I live a worthwhile life?'

(Deurzen and Adams, 2016, p. 8). Natiello (1999, p. 167) observes that: 'the opportunity for women to be real, whole, and personally powerful has traditionally been discouraged in the culture of sexism, and the exuberance with which some women finally speak in their own voice is glorious to hear', so it's good to show both of us so excited. Deurzen (2015, p. 63) also says that: 'many of us struggle with finding a balance between immersing ourselves in the public experience of participation in society...whilst maintaining a sense of inner integrity...'. (Again, to be continued...).

But how did Deurzen become important to me? I happened upon Deurzen (1999) a couple of years into training. Deurzen (1999, p. 581) considers the idea that clients might develop 'common sense' ideas and therapists might agree with them because they seem to be 'common sense'. I agreed, and sought more of Deurzen's work; my engagement deepened/deepens.

One night, aged 4, I fell head-first into a radiator. Photographs show a girl who picked herself up. Reading Deurzen (2015, p. 42) helped me to rethink lived experience like this, and realise that I've always been 'persistent, flexible and durable'. I applied such thinking to psychotherapy training. Embleton Tudor et al. (2004, p. 75) draw attention to the 'often satisfying relationships' made there. But I increasingly felt I was colliding again (and again) with the radiator. Deurzen (2015, p. 64) says that our 'centre of gravity becomes redefined by what [we] reach out towards'; I realised I didn't want what I was reaching for; I see that I am 'a vessel that can be filled and emptied, according to the times and tides of man' (Deurzen, 2015, p. 62). Deurzen (2015, p. 68) explains that when we understand this for ourselves, we may be more attuned to clients.

Before 'Twitter has everything to do with self-presentation' says Murthy (2013, p. 1062). As explained, I learned to be quiet, separate, so Twitter's visibility is a challenge. Hofer and Aubert (2013, p. 2135) talk of how Twitter enables 'a feeling that ultimately everyone is connected'. Thus, Twitter feels compatible with person-centred dialogue (Schmid, 2006, p. 245).

All this existentialism isn't just *your* idea, you know, smiles Kate... (Kate never said that, but she *could* have – even Sedaris refers to his stories as 'realish' [Cardell and Kuttainen, 2012, p. 100]!)

Kate: I'll just find my phone and turn it off. [Beep] It's off. A momentary break. (Session 19).

Extracts from client material about existential themes could easily prompt rifling through one's recordings for something about death. Extracts from therapy sessions frequently involve the charged: Smith et al. (2014, p. 122) choose something 'highly emotional' to explore. At first glance, switching off a mobile phone looks like a practical matter, but it is also revealing of autonomy/connection. As Deurzen (2015, p. 71) observes: 'we need each other and fear each other at the same time'. Kate's raising of existential themes like this – 'how should I act and be in relation to other people?' (Deurzen and Adams, 2016, p. 8) – I feel, impacted upon my own move towards existentially informed person-centredness; the 'gift of therapy' (Yalom, 2003) co-created. When I shared such feelings with Kate, she said: 'I feel quite touched by it...that we've had such an impact on each other...'. Spector's (1990, p. 190) explanation of mutuality resonates: 'when in relationship with another, the sum of the relationship is more than the constitutional parts ... a relationship based on mutuality, in which both parties are honoured and both participate and grow'.

Said Kate about what follows: It never felt forced...it felt quite, quite a natural thing for you to say...

I loved immersing myself in Deurzen (2015) (even if I was often far too over-excited by it) and, a few months into the project, I found myself in a session, relating with Kate, with Deurzen (2015) as a second skin.

Deborah (afterwards, to my supervisor): ...it was not the case that suddenly I went a bit existential and started telling Kate what to do.

Supervisor: You supported Kate to get to that place

and once she was in that place, it felt very right for you, and it was right, for you then to very clearly alter your way of working...

Kate (in the session): ...if somebody was to say: 'I need a shirt', and I've got a shirt on, I'd still be quite happy to give them the shirt that's on my back, and leave myself shirtless...

Deborah: So, why, can you sense into why you would do that? ...

Kate: ...what's just popped into my head is self-preservation, but that's not self-preservation if you are giving everything of yourself until you have nothing... [Sociological analysis contributes that: 'women are expected to give undivided attention to others' (Natiello, 1999, p. 168), so it's not that Kate has a pathology, but that society does.] ...

Deborah: ...if you were saying, 'this is what I want to be, I always want to be looking after other people much more than myself', then that would be what you'd decided to do in life..., but that doesn't sound like what you're saying, it sounds like you've not thought...about your needs...and moved on to everybody else's. [I was thinking about Deurzen's (2015, p. 67) case study of Rosa – who finally realises she does want what she has, but she wants to experience it differently; therapy helps by: 'clarifying and understanding [an issue], putting it into its right context and place' (Deurzen, 2015, p. 75)].

Kate: I've moved on to everybody else's, mainly, probably, because I've not wanted to focus on my needs, perhaps, for whatever reason. Maybe because I didn't feel like I deserved it...

Deborah: ...If we go back to your childhood...you did come through.... And sometimes it can be very easy to focus on what was awful, but actually your resources are also in there, do you see? [I'd also been reading Strasser (1997, p. 31) and he repeatedly notes a client's strengths.]

Kate: ...I know I've got a huge capacity for probably being quite resilient...

...**Deborah:** Yeah. So it's a resource that you've developed and used and it feels like you've come to a point now where you are thinking: what are

my values, what is it that I really want to stand for? [Deurzen (2015, p. x) talks about existential therapy being about 'enable[ing] people to take charge of their life'.]

'...life is an endless struggle' (Deurzen, 2015, p. 181).

1/ I'm feeling stuck.

2/ I thought I'd feel better if I read something (I didn't). I read Etherington (2004) and connected with the reality that I'd briefly recognised earlier, but that – in a state of impasse – I had not fully let in: that I'm involved in a heuristic research project. Etherington (2004, p. 111) cites Moustakas (1990), to explain that heuristic research involves processes like being 'immersed' and enabling ideas to 'incubate'. Etherington (2004, p. 114) says of her own heuristic research: '...there was so much data, so many ideas and thoughts and images and no understanding of how it might all come together – and the fear that it might not!' As I've been re-imagining a quiz rather than reading, it seems like I'm (in part) in the 'illumination', 'explication' and 'creative synthesis' stages (after all, heuristic research isn't 'linear' [Etherington, 2004, p. 111]). I need to recognise that my processes are working differently.

3/ I was thinking about my mortar board, and somehow I was drawn to some reading about the intensification of work (Vostal, 2015). ... A guiding conception for this piece arrived (taking me all the way back to my first feelings of excitement about savouring Deurzen's work) – here's how:

4/ I've been working late, then too alert for sleep, relying on Sedaris (2004, 2013) and Twitter to relax. ...I also haven't always slept well by working too hard (Vostal's [2015, p. 295] recognition that 'speed kills') and because I was excited by the intensity of my feelings (Vostal's [2015, p. 295] recognition that 'speed thrills'). Deurzen's (2015, p. 21) observation that 'life is fuelled by the differential of opposing energies' connects all these feelings; the guiding conception is, as Deurzen (2015, p. 20–21) observes, that: 'we live in fear of many things and are the master of very few, until we learn to hone our ability

to tackle whatever comes our way'. That's where I'm getting to; and I think that's what Kate's doing.

5/ Heuer (personal communication, May 2017) drew my attention to Heuer and Tudor (2017). Heuer objects to 'standardisation of an 'academic style' at the cost of stifling a plurality of creative styles and voices' (Heuer and Tudor, 2017, p. 7). I felt inspired! I started to seriously engage with the experimentation with form that hitherto I'd been playing with... 'my centre of gravity becomes redefined by what I reach out towards' (Deurzen, 2015, p. 64).

Journaling, then, negotiated an impasse: 'writing has the power to transcend traditional thought and bring us to new awareness' (Haertl, 2014, p. 60). Haertl (2014, p. 64) talks of journaling having 'unique personal and interpersonal qualities that lead to the development of the self'. Writing makes me feel inky-fingered – reading/writing fluently opened up a new world at school; writing, for me, always signifies freedom.

'There have been numerous times when clients have struggled towards a sense of what their priorities and values were, when I have suddenly slotted a new piece of my own puzzle of life into place' (Deurzen, 2015, p. 148).

I couldn't work out where to restart the case study... In session 73, Kate raised something she had felt in the previous session. Rennie (2007, p. 57) says that: 'the power differential between clients and the therapist makes it difficult to initiate meta-communication', but...

Kate: ...this is going to sound bad... I knew that... you would kind of be... perhaps... looking out for me being not very compassionate with myself ... [so] I was trying very hard to be neutral....

Deborah: So we could if you wanted to, next time or another time, run it again with all the absolute worst in it, so you aren't not doing it because I won't appreciate it...

I spent time wondering if I had got it wrong by being too positive; but Kate and I were actually exemplifying Rennie's (2007, p. 57) point that

'when both parties are candid, they become more transparent to the other, enabling them better able to sort out their differences and come closer together'. Going into session 74, I wondered if an opportunity would arise for Kate to do what we had talked of. The session took a different course; Kate spoke positively about herself.

I realised that the negative/positive polarities I'd grasped at were ultimately unhelpful, leading me towards something fixed (something like a traditional case study). With Kate's help, I took in the philosophical position of remaining open to complexity: '...existential therapy is teamwork' (Deurzen, 2015, p. 147).

'Passion is not about heroism or success. It is our capacity for being low and slow, bad and deficient, and bereft and sorrowing, whilst still desiring to stretch out once more. Passion is what leads us to improve ourselves and reach for something greater than what we have known before or what we are' (Deurzen, 2015, p. 93).

Mornington Crescent?

Session 79 continues...

Deborah: I'm wondering what it would be like, if every now and again, you did ask what was coming up for you rather than thinking that might not be ok... I could always say 'no', couldn't I?

Kate: ...There's always the no. But then I wouldn't want to, kind of, that be awkward, or make you feel awkward... But I don't think [that would happen], actually...

Deborah: Are there things I shouldn't tell? Should I not have told you [a practical matter I'd shared before the previous session]?

Kate: ...not at all, no.

Deborah: I did that because I didn't want you to think I had forgotten about changing the appointment, but a few things slipped while I was busy thinking about [something else]. [*This took me to Ziv-Beiman and Shahar's (2016, p. 276) paper, where a therapist self-discloses and a client objects. Ziv-Beiman and Shahar (2016, p. 273) comment*

that, therapist self-disclosure can be an error 'if it propels [clients] to 'react' rather than 'emerge'. What does Kate do?]

Kate: ... [Intake of breath] Did you manage to [do it] successfully?

Deborah: Is that a test?

Kate: Yeah, I'm testing it now [both laughing].

We're reaching the end, and a time to evaluate.... I'm proposing the evaluation criterion of Mornington Crescent: does this piece arrive at that stop on the London underground? In the BBC Radio 4 programme, 'I'm Sorry I Haven't a Clue' ('the antidote to panel games') (Listener: At last!), Mornington Crescent is rule-free, and when it is reached the game is complete. Kate just tested the 'rules', developing from 'what does a client do?'. What will Kate do next...? Foster (2012, p. 540) talks of 'pleasure' as an 'evaluative criterion'. In this case study, disrupting expected content and form pleases me. Kate and I swam (in our different ways) in the Sargasso Sea – conditions of worth weren't obliterated; unreasonable demands don't go away (Natiello, 1999, p.168), I don't think either of us have completely found 'a balance' (Deurzen, 2015, p. 63); but we did/do embrace the idea that 'the more we practise the better we get' (Deurzen, 2015, p. 11).

The end is nigh, and something's missing... I've been aware that while I've said my connection with Deurzen (2015) is visceral, I haven't been able to convey my feelings exactly; I haven't pushed it, but the rabbit is peering from the hat... My excitement for this project has always been located in my chest, prompting a restriction of breathing that is panicky/exhilarating; 'my existence as a solid person in the world, starts from my chest, from which I feel myself rise and radiate' (Young, 2005, p. 75). Finlay's (2014) paper reminded me of Gendlin's (1978) focusing. As I started to 'clear a space' (Gendlin, 1978, p.43), Bondi's (2013, p.15) words that 'loss is an integral part of life' caught my eye. The 'handle' of loss 'resonated', there was a 'felt shift' (Gendlin, 1978, p. 44) – an untightening. I recalled that re-reading [the prequel to this piece] always moves me; I 'asked' (Gendlin, 1978, p.44): what is happening for me

as I write this sequel? The postponement of loss 'resonated' (Gendlin, 1978, p.44). My tight-chested excitement declares 'I'm alive'; its intensity also reveals 'ontological insecurity' (Deurzen, 2015, p. 23), 'fears and loneliness' (Deurzen, 2015, p. 25), of endings, of goodbyes. But as Deurzen (2015, p. 49) says: 'life and death are two sides of the same coin. They cannot be had without each other; they should not be kept apart and in isolation' (Deurzen, 2015, p. 49), and they haven't been; excitement, impasse, life, death...; I've experienced a powerful personal process thanks to Deurzen (2015). Mornington Crescent! 'Perfection, no matter how desirable, is nothing but death' (Deurzen, 2015, p. 34).

Obituary (or conclusion, if you prefer!)

'@emmyzen liked your Tweet! (and other stories). The antidote to case studies' spent its life inspired by encounter: encounter with Deurzen (2015), being 'reached into and changed by [its] gravitational pull' (Totton, 2015, p. 27) and encounter with Kate – Kate's raising of existential themes and some similar 'problems in living' (Deurzen, 2015, p.8) created ground for encounter with Deurzen (2015).

'@emmyzen liked...' became a heuristic (Moustakas, 1990) case study. It advanced research in the fields of MTC (Papayianni and Cooper, 2017) combining it with mutuality (Spector, 1999). With collaborators, it explored Deborah's development, via 'malleable and flexible' (Deurzen, 2015, p. 62) existential processes of excitement and impasse.

'@emmyzen liked...' considered how an established therapy relationship was impacted by engagement with Deurzen (2015). Some extracts particularly showed Deborah bringing Deurzen (2015) to Kate's engagement with existential themes, and Kate declaring that this felt 'natural'. While, in this way, the work gently challenged Cooper's (2010, p. 188) assertion that 'by the time it impacts upon a client's interpersonal world, a big change in the therapist's internal world may make only a very small difference to the client's internal world', there was no intention to give a 'scientific' (Widdowson, 2011, p. 25) answer, for: 'the last word for the therapist always has to be the Socratic 'I know that I

know nothing"' (Schmid, 2005, p. 83).

'@emmyzen liked...' engaged in politically informed, ethically aware written self-disclosure. Sussman (2007, pp. 185–186) says that if therapist self-disclosure only happens in personal therapy 'we perpetuate a professional culture in which clinicians do not feel free to expose their vulnerabilities...'. Then, only clients appear to *have* 'vulnerabilities' (Sussman, 2007, p.186). Finlay (2002, p. 544) says: "coming out' through reflexive analysis is ultimately a political act. Done well, it has the potential to enliven, teach, and spur readers towards a more radical consciousness".

The multiple arts-based approaches presentation of '@emmyzen liked...' was also political: a challenge to the current conformity of case studies. '@emmyzen liked...' experimented, and grappled with the 'interplay between personal writing and the development of the self' (Haertl, 2014, p. 65): 'self' remained 'process rather than essence' (Deurzen, 2015, p. 62), but with an inky delight in constancy (Tudor and Worrall, 2006, p. 107).

While '@emmyzen liked...' was unusual, Tudor and Worrall (2006, p. 2) insist (and '@emmyzen liked...' would have agreed) that: person-centred therapy is 'a broad church', giving people 'opportunity to integrate that which is personally and idiosyncratically important to them' (Tudor and Worrall, 2006, p. 4).

As such, '@emmyzen liked...' (with her final breaths) argued that if we are to meaningfully value our unfolding, and the unfolding of others, there can be no 'general principles' (McLeod, 2010, p.28) for case studies.... But that can't, also, be a rule...! 📍



Biography

Dr Deborah A. Lee is Senior Lecturer in Sociology at Nottingham Trent University, and has just completed training as an existentially informed, person-centred psychotherapist. Her current research interests include arts-based approaches to writing psychotherapy, the politics of psychotherapy training, and drawing together psychotherapy and sociology. Deborah is an Associate Editor and Co-Editor for

Reviews at *Psychotherapy and Politics International*, and a member of the UKCP Ethics Committee.

*Email Deborah.Lee@ntu.ac.uk

Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank – The Editor and reviewers. Emmy van Deurzen, Gottfried M. Heuer, Keith Tudor, Glenda Melville, Michelle Addison Raven, Ambika Erin Connelly, Miriam Granthier and, of course, Kate Smith. Thanks are also extended to the BBC Copyright Department for permission to use the format of BBC Radio 4's *Round Britain Quiz* and to reference *I'm Sorry I Haven't a Clue*. This work was completed at the Sherwood Psychotherapy Training Institute Ltd, Nottingham.

References

- Adams, M. (2014). *The myth of the untroubled therapist*. London: Routledge.
- Bager-Charleson, S. (2010). *Why therapists choose to become therapists*. London: UKCP / Karnac.
- Barrett-Lennard, G. (1998). *Carl Rogers' helping system: journey and substance*. London: Sage.
- Bolton, G. (1999). 'Every poem breaks a silence that had to be overcome': the therapeutic power of poetry writing. *Feminist Review*, 62, 118–133.
- Bolton, G. (2006). Narrative writing: reflective enquiry into professional practice. *Educational Action Research*, 14(2), 203–218.
- Bondi, L. (2013). Research and therapy: generating meaning and feeling gaps. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 19(1), 9–19.
- Boydell, K., Hodgins, M., Gladstone, B., Stasiulis, E., Belliveau, G., Cheu, H., Kontos, P., & Parsons, J. (2016). Arts-based health research and academic legitimacy: transcending hegemonic conventions. *Qualitative Research*, 16(6), 681–700.
- British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) (2004). *Ethical guidelines for researching counselling and psychotherapy*. [Online] Available from: bacp.co.uk/research/ethical_guidelines.php.
- British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (2016). *Ethical framework*. [Online] Available from: bacp.co.uk/ethical_framework/.
- Cardell, K., & Kuttainen, K. (2012). The ethics of laughter: David Sedaris and the humour memoir. *Mosaic*, 45(3), 99–114.
- Chesler, P. (2005). *Women and madness*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Clark, A. (2017). David Sedaris: 'There are things nobody wants to hear. The disturbing things are great'. *The Guardian*, 2nd June. Available from: theguardian.com/books/2017/jun/02/david-sedaris-interview-essayist-comedian.
- Cooper, M. (2010). The challenge of counselling and psychotherapy research. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 10(3), 183–191.
- Deurzen, E. v. (1999). Common sense or nonsense: intervening in ethical dilemmas. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 27(4), 581–586.
- Deurzen, E. v. (2009). *Psychotherapy and the quest for happiness*. London: Sage.
- Deurzen, E. v. (2015). *Paradox and passion in psychotherapy: an existential approach*. Chichester: Wiley Blackwell.
- Du Plock, S. (1997). Introduction. In S. Du Plock (Ed.), *Case studies in existential psychotherapy and counselling*. Chichester: Wiley.
- Embleton Tudor, L., Keemar, K., Tudor, K., Valentine, J., & Worrall, M. (2004). *The person-centred approach: a contemporary introduction*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Etherington, K. (2004). *Becoming a reflexive researcher*. London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Finlay, L. (2002). 'Outing' the researcher: the provenance, process and practice of reflexivity. *Qualitative Research*, 12(4), 531–545.
- Finlay, L. (2014). Embodying research. *Person-Centred & Experiential Psychotherapies*, 13(1), 4–18.
- Foster, V. (2012). The pleasure principle: employing arts-based methods in social work research. *European Journal of Social Work*, 15(4), 532–545.
- Freestone, D., & Morrison, K. (2012). The Sargasso Sea. *International Journal of Marine and Coastal Law*, 27(3), 647–655.
- Gendlin, E. (1978). *Focusing*. London: Everest House.
- Haertl, K. (2014). Writing and the development of the self-heuristic inquiry: a unique way of exploring the power of the written word. *Journal of Poetry Therapy*, 27(2), 55–68.
- Heuer, G. (2017). Personal communication, May.
- Heuer, G., & Tudor, K. (2017). On style. *Psychotherapy and Politics International*, 15, 1–14.
- Hofer, M., & Aubert, V. (2013). Perceived bridging and bonding social capital on Twitter: differentiating between followers and followees. *Computers in Human Behaviour*, 29, 2134–2142.
- Lafreniere, D., & Cox, S. (2012). 'If you can call it a poem':

- towards a framework for the assessment of arts-based works. *Qualitative Research*, 13(3), 318–336.
- Lee, D. (2018) Enter centre stage the case study. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 46(3), 304–314.
- Lodge, D. (2011). *The art of fiction*. London: Vintage.
- McLeod, J. (2010). *Case study research*. London: Sage.
- Moustakas, C. (1990). *Heuristic research*. London: Sage.
- Murthy, D. (2012). Towards a sociological understanding of social media: theorising Twitter. *Sociology*, 46(6), 1059–1073.
- Natiello, P. (1999). The person-centred approach: solution to gender splitting. In Fairhurst, I. (Ed.), *Women writing in the person-centred approach* (pp. 163–172). Ross-on-Wye: PCCS Books.
- Papayianni, F., & Cooper, M. (2018). Metatherapeutic communication: an exploratory analysis of therapist-reported moments of dialogue regarding the nature of the therapeutic work. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 46(2), 173–184.
- Proctor, G. (2004). What can person-centred therapy learn from feminism? In G. Proctor & M.-B. Napier (Eds), *Encountering feminism: intersections between feminism and the person-centred approach* (pp. 117–128). Ross on Wye: PCCS Books.
- Rennie, D. (2007). Reflexivity and its radical form: implications for the practice of humanistic psychotherapies. *Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy*, 37, 53–58.
- Rogers, C. (1978). *Personal power*. London: Constable.
- Rogers, N., Tudor, K., Embleton Tudor, L., & Keemar, K. (2012). Person-centred expressive arts therapy: a theoretical encounter. *Person-Centred & Experiential Psychotherapies*, 11(1), 31–47.
- Scherb, E. (2014). The case of 'Sonia': psychotherapy with a complex, difficult patient grounded in the integrated psychotherapy model of Hector Fernandez-Alvarez. *Pragmatic Case Studies in Psychotherapy*, 10(1), 1–29.
- Schmid, P. (2005). Authenticity and alienation: towards an understanding of the person beyond the categories of order and disorder. In S. Joseph & R. Worsley (Eds), *Person-centred psychopathology: a positive psychology of mental health* (pp. 75–90). Ross on Wye: PCCS Books.
- Sedaris, D. (2004). *Dress your family in corduroy and denim*. New York: Little, Brown.
- Sedaris, D. (2013). *Let's explore diabetes with owls*. New York: Little, Brown.
- Smith, K., Shoemark, A., McLeod, J., & McLeod, J. (2014). Moving on: a case analysis of process and outcome in person-centred psychotherapy for health anxiety. *Person-centred & Experiential Psychotherapies*, 13(2), 111–127.
- Spector, S. (1999). Exploring the 'we': global, relational and personal perspectives on relationship. In I. Fairhurst (Ed.), *Women writing in the person-centred approach*. Ross on Wye: PCCS Books.
- Strasser, F. (1997). The case of Bernadette – the tyranny of sedimentation. In S. Du Plock (Ed.), *Case studies in existential psychotherapy and counselling* (pp. 28–41). Chichester: Wiley.
- Sussman, M. (2007). *A curious calling: unconscious motivations for practicing psychotherapy*. Plymouth: Aaronson.
- The Magic Circle (2016). themagiccircle.co.uk
- Tickle, E., & Murphy, D. (2014). A journey to client and therapist mutuality in person-centred psychotherapy: a case study. *Person-Centred & Experiential Psychotherapies*, 13(4), 337–351.
- Totton, N. (2015). *Embodied relating*. London: Karnac.
- Tudor, K., & Merry, T. (2002). *Dictionary of person-centred psychology*. Ross on Wye: PCCS Books.
- Tudor, K., & Worrall, M. (2006). *Person-centred therapy: a clinical philosophy*. London: Routledge.
- Watson, V.C., Cooper, M., McArthur, K., & McLeod, J. (2012). Helpful therapeutic processes: client activities, therapist activities and helpful effects. *European Journal of Psychotherapy and Counselling*, 14(1), 77–89.
- Wilkins, P. (2005). Assessment and 'diagnosis' in person-centred therapy. In S. Joseph & R. Worsley (Eds), *Person-centred psychopathology: a positive psychology of mental health* (pp. 128–145). Ross on Wye: PCCS Books.
- Willis, A., Bondi, L., Burgess, M.C., Miller, G., & Fergusson, D. (2014). Engaging with a history of counselling, spirituality and faith in Scotland: a readers' theatre script. *British Journal of Guidance and Counselling*, 42(5), 525–543.
- Vostal, F. (2015). Speed kills, speed thrills: constraining and enabling accelerations in academic work-life. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 13(3), 295–314.
- Yalom, I. (2003). *The gift of therapy*. London: Piatkus.
- Young, I.M. (2005). *On female body experience*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ziv-Beiman, S., & Shahar, G. (2016). Therapeutic self-disclosure in integrative psychotherapy: when is this a clinical error? *Psychotherapy*, 55, 273–277.