

**Marnie Sather**  
*PhD*

## Politics in Therapy and Narrative Projects

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### Acknowledgement

I would like to acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation the Traditional Custodians of the Land on which I am presenting today. I pay my respects to their Elders both past and present and extend that respect to other Indigenous Australians.

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### What does attending to politics in therapy make possible?

In small groups discuss:

What are things that we think about in our work that might contribute to our acknowledging and responding to the politics of gender, race, and class?

Are their communities, people, places, things, ideas, practices that support you in holding onto this awareness? What difference might this make if there are political dilemmas raised in your work?

Can you think of a time in your work, when being aware of the politics made something more possible for someone you were consulting with. Could you share the story, and what difference do you think this made?

(Questions adapted from Denborough, D. (2019). Political dictionary for the field of narrative practice. Dulwich Centre Publications. Pp. 171-172)

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Three  
examples of  
responding  
to politics in  
my work.

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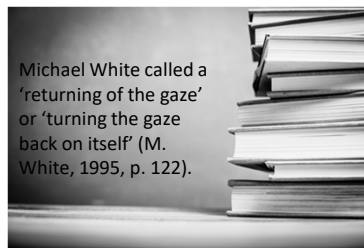
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## Returning The Gaze.



Michael White called a  
'returning of the gaze'  
or 'turning the gaze  
back on itself' (M.  
White, 1995, p. 122).

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## Politics of responding

*Three months later, I went to the station and  
lost it a little bit deliberately so they could see  
the effects of what they did to me when they  
told me. I said, I want to talk about – you  
people already have to work hard at making  
your name a good name in the community,  
and I think this is something that you need to  
listen to, about how I was treated at the  
scene. What happened is that I really dwelled  
on how the police treated me for a very long  
time.*

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Questions  
we can ask  
back.

*Questions for the police:*

Would you have done things differently if you hadn't been recruited into having to be tough?

How can we be sensitive to your experiences?

What support might be needed to enable you to show empathy?

In those first confronting moments, what do you imagine might be helpful to others in these first moments of horror?

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A letter

To first responders

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What has this made possible in my  
work now?

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### Giving Voice to Children



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### Elevating Children's Knowledges

Michael White elucidated the politics of **local knowledges** in a discussion of Michel Foucault's understanding of knowledge that is 'low down on the hierarchy':

The second class of subjugated knowledges are those which Foucault refers to as 'local popular' or 'indigenous' knowledges: those "regional" knowledges that are currently in circulation but are denied or deprived of the space in which they could be adequately performed. These are knowledges that survive only at the margins of society and are lowly ranked – considered insufficient and exiled from the legitimate domain of the formal knowledges and the accepted sciences. They are the 'naïve knowledges, located low down on the hierarchy, beneath the required level of cognition or scientificity'. (M. White & Epston, 1990, p. 26)

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### Children Reassuring Mothers

*There have been times when we used to go to the cemetery all together, and there was one time I said, 'oh I just wish Dad was here ... I wish I had just not gone to work that day'. And my son said to me, 'Mum, if it hadn't been that day, it would have been another day, you know that ... Dad was on a journey that wasn't to old age; it was just to when it got too much'. And I know that.*

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Politics in Complex Grief: Women’s experiences after the loss of a male partner to suicide.

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Double  
Taboo

*It took me a few times to leave. I finally got the courage to leave. But of course, he drew me back in. So, this year I had to grapple with the joy of finally being free, still getting over the past, and the abuse he subjected me to – even to this day.*

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The impact  
of the death

Women shared these words:

*It's hard to say it's suicide.*

*Not wanting to lie.*

*Hard to speak about details surrounding the death.*

*Thoughtfulness in telling people, to not upset others.*

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## Making meaning of partners deaths

The acts of dignity demonstrated included:

*Treating our partner as if they still mattered.*

*Treating their body with care.*

*Protecting their life's work – what they held dear remains meaningful.*

*What matters to our loved one matters to us.*

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## Questions

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## References

I would like to note that this reference list is in relation to some key ideas in narrative practice for this talk, it doesn't take into account the feminist thinkers that I draw from.

Denborough, D. (2008). *Collective narrative practice: Responding to individuals, groups, and communities who have experienced trauma*. Dulwich Centre Publications.

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White, M. (1988c). Saying hullo again: The incorporation of the lost relationship in the resolution of grief. *Dulwich Centre Newsletter*, (Spring), 7–11.

White, M., & Epston, D. (1990). *Narrative means to therapeutic ends*. Norton.

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