

'One Size Does Not Fit All': Understanding the situated nature of reflective practices

Abstract

This paper revisits Donald Schön's concepts of 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action' to argue that reflective practice occurs in the moment-by-moment processes of trial-and-error learning that occur in everyday practice. Following Schön, we highlight the context-, task- and conceptually specific nature of reflective and reflexive processes and the need for practitioners to be able to interrogate these. The paper illustrates 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action' by looking closely at two examples of practice-near research and opening these up for questioning. Price brings research material of practitioners reflecting at the Mulberry Bush, a children's home and specialist school. Deveci discusses reflexive processes occurring during professional doctoral research with undocumented youth. We consider the complex relationship between trauma and power, illustrated by both research examples. In concluding we suggest that reflective practice provision needs to be part of a dialogue *in situ*, rather than 'bolted on' within 'one-size-fits-all' interventions in a way that devalues on-the-job reflection.

Keywords: reflection-on-action, reflection-in-action, reflective practice, reflexivity, trauma, power.

Introduction

Most practitioners in social work, social care, teaching and health-related professions are familiar with the requirement to undertake reflective practice. Practice researchers are also familiar with the related requirement to be reflexive during the research process. But there continues to be debate and uncertainty about what reflection and reflexivity look like in practice and what the 'right' way to do them is. In 2010, social work practice educator Graham Ixer concluded provocatively there was no such thing as reflection (p. 76), given the lack of clarity about it. More recently,

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social psychological researchers Lazard and McAvoy (2020) drew attention to the 'ambiguous and implicit' way in which 'doing' reflexivity is frequently presented in qualitative research (p. 159).

This paper argues for a return to the pioneering work of Donald Schön (1983, 1987; with Martin Rein, 1994) and his investigations of reflective practices as highly context- and task-specific. The paper revisits Schön's concepts of 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action' (1983, p. 276), which capture the demanding but not always very visible moment-by-moment processes of trial-and-error learning that occur during everyday practice, and afterwards in conversation with colleagues. Schön argued that 'reflection-in-action' and 'reflection-on-action' build competence and justify the characterisation of professional practice as an art (Schön, 1983: 50).

The paper aims to exemplify these two processes, with each author bringing an example of their research practice for questioning by the other. The 'methodology' and 'discussion' sections of the paper are therefore presented in a 'question-and-answer' format. Price brings material from her research team's commissioned studies (Price et. al., 2017, 2020) of therapeutic and reflective practice provision at the Mulberry Bush, a children's home and specialist school. She presents the material in the form of a composite vignette. Deveci brings material from her professional doctorate (Deveci, 2022) researching the lives of young people with 'no papers'. She presents a summary of an in-depth interview with one young person.

Price's research analysis accepts and uses the conceptual frame of understanding employed by the Mulberry Bush staff - psychodynamic, therapeutic community and trauma-informed. Deveci draws on systemic, decolonial and black feminist thinking to address dynamics of power. Schön himself argued that professionals must 'undertake the often arduous task of opening...up to inquiry' (Schön, 1983: 289), and each of our conceptual and practice choices requires justification. We attempt this through questioning each other.

In our conclusion, we review some of our recommendations for practitioners, and briefly reflect on the potential interconnections between trauma and power that have begun to emerge from the process of discussing our research practice examples.

Background

Before addressing the specificity of reflective practices and processes, it is important to define what they may all have in common. In reviewing education practice, Michael Eraut (2004) drew initially on a dictionary definition of reflection:

“The action of turning back or fixing the thoughts on some subject; meditation, serious consideration...The process or faculty by which the mind has knowledge of itself” (adapted from a citation in Eraut, 2004: 47)

Here, 'reflection' describes a critical thought process seeking to go beyond the taken-for-granted. It encompasses reflexivity, or knowledge of the self. These two aspects underpin all reflective practices and processes. Ixer's (2010) review of reflective practice further noted it might have more than one dimension, identifying cognitive, affective, social and values-based aspects (p. 78).

Many professionals in forms of relationship-based practice also pursue qualitative research within their respective fields. The 'reflexive turn' (Parker 2015) in the social sciences requires researchers to appreciate how their subjectivity is included within the research field through the choices they make about their research question, design, execution and conclusions (Lazard and McAvoy, 2020). Lazard and McAvoy note that 'closeness' to the field is not automatically identified as a problem within this paradigm, but it requires researcher awareness of the 'dangers of presumption of sameness' (p. 165). The authors recommend a commitment to 'epistemological reflexivity', where the researcher asks at each stage, but particularly in relation to their theoretical and methodological commitments, 'what is the research process and how am I influencing it?' (p. 167). This is reflexivity as a rigorous 'interrogatory tool' (p. 172) rather than as the automatic declaration of one's personal experience, investment and social characteristics.

Schön wanted to understand the professional inquirer's reflective conversation with their practice situation, which is usually uncertain, unstable and unique. To help them, they draw on constants within their professional domain to 'frame' the problem: a professional set of values, overarching theories specific to their discipline and 'role frames' defining their particular task (Schön, 1983, p. 270). Thus, their knowledge is situated, partial, and context- and task- specific. Schön also observed that because practitioners are focussed on problem-solving, they may

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'blend' perspectives and epistemologies that in an academic or political context would be deemed conceptually incompatible or opposed, in the service of 'getting the job done' (with Rein, 1994, pp. 176-8). And increasingly, Schön noted, practitioners are asked to be transparent about their knowledge frames to themselves and their audiences – from the late 1960s, the rise of service user movements and radical criticism of the professions meant practitioners could not rely on a mystique of expertise for their mandate to improve the social world.

This background review has argued for the situated nature of reflective and reflexive processes. The paper now introduces two research practice examples and in the spirit of Schön, opens them up for inquiry. Deveci's focus is on the socio-political context, contrasting with Price's focus on trauma and therapeutic practice. In the section below we describe the distinctive starting points contributing to our different analytic strategies.

Research contexts

Price's research took place at the Mulberry Bush, a therapeutic residential children's home and specialist school. The Mulberry Bush provides long term placements for primary-aged children who have experienced severe early relational trauma compounded by placement breakdowns and school exclusions. Children in care have secured the physical and legal protection of the state and have basic levels of safety. But contemporary psychodynamic, neurodevelopmental and trauma-informed perspectives (Redfern et. al, 2018; Onions, 2018) suggest carers and teachers need ongoing training and support to create conditions of psychological safety for everyone in the setting. Strand and Sprang (2018, p. v) draw attention to trauma's power to 'thwart' and 'disrupt' states of mind and wider organisational systems. Narey (2016) addressed this in his call for 'resilience and moral strength' (p. 60) in the residential care workforce, quoting one Chief Executive of a home:

"This is a really difficult counter-cultural truth, that there are not two classes of people, one safe and one unsafe, one 'normal' and one 'perverse'. Under the pressure... that these children present, it is safest to assume that in the wrong

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circumstances, at the wrong time, many people if not most, are capable of offending." (p. 61)

Price et. al.'s (2020) commissioned research studied the Mulberry Bush's training model and reflective practice provision, following an earlier project considering the children's therapeutic provision (Price et. al., 2017; 2018).

Deveci's research project grew out of 15 years' experience of working with young refugees and migrants in an urban community charity. Prior to starting her doctorate, she had founded Dost Centre for Young Refugees and Migrants, supporting children and young people seeking protection and safety in the UK. Dost's youth and community workers focussed on relationship-building with trusted adults and peers through fun activities, and on liaison and advocacy work, to secure the young people's physical, legal and psychological safety (Deveci, 2012). At Dost Deveci was brought into contact with the everyday 'bordering practices' (Yuval-Davis et. al., 2019) and restrictive immigration legislation used by the British state to exclude migrant and asylum-seeking children and young people from the protections and entitlements of citizenship.

Deveci's subsequent research draws on in-depth interviews with seven young people recruited through professional networks. She discusses how the exclusion, discrimination and violence of UK border control can be understood as part of the ongoing legacies of colonial history (Bhambra et al, 2018), and considers how different practitioners supporting this group of young people might help them to construct their everyday lives more safely.

We have briefly contextualised the different starting points of our projects and begun to explain how these informed the conceptual lenses we chose to frame our focus. In the sections that follow, we explore each other's research questions, designs and processes of execution in more depth.

Methodology

Questions for Price

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YD: Given that your project was commissioned, how free were you to determine the research focus?

Price: Well, for the first project studying therapeutic provision for the children, University College, London were completing an 'outcomes' study, so we were asked to look at the therapeutic process – what the model was and how it worked on the ground. For the second study, the Mulberry Bush were reviewing their reflective practice provision and we contributed to that, looking at staff understanding of the reflective practice model, how it helped them in their work, what was and wasn't working well. But we were free to reach our own conclusions.

What was your ethical approach?

We sought informed consent and explained the limits to anonymity. It's a small organisation, people could recognise themselves in published material, so we took care to choose examples illustrating repeated themes. And with the kids in the first, ethnographic project, there was a process of ongoing consent or assent - the school council helped us to think about what this would look like in different situations. We had research supervision throughout.

What was your data collection strategy?

Staff complete a mandatory foundation degree award with reflective modules, so we chose to analyse 15 first year FDA journal-based reflective assignments. We interviewed 18 staff members from across the organisation and then ran two focus groups. There are about 120 staff and about a third volunteered. We did limit participation, so we don't know about the remaining two thirds.

Why did you use thematic analysis, and composite vignettes?

You can use thematic analysis with different kinds of data and the findings it generates are easily accessible to a non-academic audience. Composite vignettes add a further layer to the anonymising process, and they show how complex, situated and interconnected individuals' accounts and data extracts are, and that matches to people's lived experience of practice. So again, more accessible and

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actually more useful for prompting thought about practice, as it matches the reality on the ground.

Questions for Deveci

HP: Your research is with young people in extremely precarious circumstances, how did you think about your ethical approach?

YD: For me ethics is at the heart of practice. I tried to always hold in mind core principles of respect, kindness and justice. Ethics is a relational practice, it's about prioritising relational responsibility, caring for the relationship, and I found this perspective helpful as a way of making in-the-moment decisions.

Can you tell me a bit about your methodology, how you gathered and analysed the data?

I did think quite pragmatically, as Schön and Rein note, about 'getting the job done'. I was very aware of the importance of relationships in sustaining work with undocumented young people, so I created a structure of multiple meetings and used narrative methods to explore the present, past and future with my participants. For the analysis, I blended several theoretically diverse methods and creative processes to create a hybrid approach. Also, I kept a research journal throughout to capture my own reflective and reflexive processes.

Does the idea of 'epistemological reflexivity' make sense to you?

Absolutely. I wanted my project to be grounded in a relational approach, informed by Black feminist and decolonial thinking. For me, using reflexivity as an 'interrogatory tool' meant a continuous reflexive dialogue about the theoretical frames I was using for storytelling, for representation. I wanted concepts and ideas that would help me think about responsibility, power and positioning in this politicised, racialised area of the state's immigration and bordering practices.

Research material and discussion

The Mulberry Bush: composite vignette

Jack (teaching assistant) restrains eight-year-old Ethan as he is about to throw a chair at another child.

'Ow, ow, ow! Get off, you bastard!' Jack is holding Ethan's elbows from behind whilst Ethan kicks him in the shins. Jack says calmly, 'No, I'm not hurting you. But I'm not letting go until you stop hurting people and possibly hurting yourself.' 'Fuck off, you bastard! And you [to me, without looking at me] you fucking get out of my classroom, you bitch!' I move to stand in the half-open doorway. Ethan pauses in the kicking and Jack relaxes the hold.

They sit alongside each other and Jack asks about a fight between Ethan and thirteen-year-old Cherize the previous evening. Ethan explains hotly that Cherize grabbed him around the neck and joked about it. Jack empathises with Ethan's feelings but then decides to confront him about the ensuing violence:

'How did it lead to you punching Megan (therapeutic care practitioner) several times in the face?' 'She got in the WAY!' Shouts Ethan angrily. 'She was trying to stop the fight between you and Cherize. She was trying to help, and she got punched in the face for trying to do that. How do you think that made her feel?'

'UPSET!' Shouts Ethan and puts his face in his arms. 'Upset...I think a bit more than upset.' There is a pause and Jack adds, 'I think you're quite good at quickly saying sorry when something like this happens, but you don't really want to think much about people's feelings. How about hurt...and possibly sad...and probably, scared? It sounds like quite a scary situation!' Ethan says, still with his face hidden, 'Well, she shouldn't work here if she doesn't want to get hurt.' Jack says, 'People absolutely do not work here to get hurt. They work here because they want to help. Megan was trying to help, and she got punched in the face just for trying. Is that fair?' There is a long pause and Ethan says, 'No,' reluctantly but genuinely. Jack adds, 'I want you to think about how you can say you are sorry to Megan. And mean it. (Observation from first project)

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In her reflective foundation degree assignment reviewing her first year at the Mulberry Bush, Megan notes her own response to learning to restrain children - '*As a child I experienced and witnessed abuse and I often wonder if my dislike of restraining children has anything to do with that*'. She writes about her initial experiences with Ethan, illustrating these with a quotation from her journal:

Whilst physically managing Ethan with the help of a more experienced team member, he continued to kick and push, saying, 'I'm going to make you the most angry you've ever been, I want to see the angry you'. I felt awful as I didn't know what to do, I wasn't sure on how to contain the situation, I ended up swapping with a different adult, but I felt angry and annoyed.

Megan then describes feeling dislike for Ethan but also, how she worked hard to set this aside. Initially, she recalls establishing a better relationship, to the point where he begins to particularly want her. Whilst she is flattered, and she notes some good times, her journal records her feeling that other team members began 'leaving her to it' - '*Having spent so much time with Ethan has left me quite full of his feelings. I was able to keep him calm but feel disappointed in the remaining adults in the team.*' Ethan then begins to target her violently when she attends to other children. Megan notes, '*[Our] fun-filled, positive experiences...make the thought of him targeting me all the more confusing. Jane [supervisor] suggested that we took it to the team which was both terrifying and a relief.*'

Megan recalls that in group supervision, her team thought about what Ethan could be replaying from his past. They agreed that Megan should step back from work with Ethan and focus on practising 'in the round' with a range of children. Others then stepped forward, being particularly vigilant around Megan and Ethan (her assignment notes one team member admitting '*he dreaded working with me as it meant he had to work twice as hard*'). Megan recalls some timetabled 1-1 work being initiated with Ethan and another colleague.

Jane, Megan's house team leader, noted in interview that team supervision groups invite staff to open up about their thoughts and feelings and sometimes people can feel vulnerable and uncertain about this. Nevertheless, she argued for the benefits, giving an example of two colleagues differing in their approach to Ethan damaging

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his room – one thought the situation should have been allowed to play out whereas another thought restraint was appropriate. Jane suggested this might go beyond an individual disagreement about practice – *'It might be that what's actually going on is that the group are quite happy for those two people to hold the bickering because it relieves everybody else of those difficult feelings.'* She suggested if the group is working well, a more general curiosity can emerge about these common practice dilemmas:

The understanding of different ways of working, what we can and can't tolerate, takes people to a new level. I think it gives people a greater sense of agency - if we make a decision, as long as we can justify it to ourselves and explain it to others, even if you don't agree with it and then I might decide afterwards I won't do that again, actually it's okay. Having a sense of agency in our work is really, really important.

In interview, Jack described his initial experiences of being challenged by colleagues in a reflective space about his practice with Cherize. There was a relatively small age gap between them, and he noted, with affection, *'I like working with Cherize. Whenever we do maths work together it's hilarious, she's so funny'*. He'd observed Cherize's attention-seeking behaviour with males and her habit of 'draping off' a staff member if given the chance but didn't connect it to himself. When team members pointedly drew his attention to it, he was initially defensive:

I kind of felt like what I'm doing isn't wrong as such because I'm keeping the child safe in a space where they're actually able to do their maths work which is why they're here because they haven't been able to do that in school in a space that they can feel safe to learn in.

Initially when he talked one-to-one with his supervisor he felt got at, but over time he *'saw the point'* and resolved to set boundaries around *'personal space'* with Cherize. Of the challenging, he added:

Sometimes they just need to put things in a way that might not sound all fluffy and lovey-dovey...you need to realise that okay they mean business.

Composite vignette: discussion

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YD: Ethically, following your principle of ongoing assent, do you think you should've stopped observing Ethan?

HP: It was a judgement call, there were times we did withdraw, I have thought a lot about this. I don't want to sound defensive, but I was a regular presence, Ethan knew me quite well, this was quite a busy space, there are 3 other staff members and the rest of the class present too. He calmed down after I stepped back. But also, I'm the principal 'outsider' so yes, I could've left. Ethan and I did have a good conversation later in the morning, not about the incident, and he smiled at me when he showed Jack the card he'd made for Megan. But still. A good question.

This composite vignette looks like it 'speaks for itself' but you've crafted it and selected the material – why these extracts, is there an 'agenda'?

Yes! I'll try and unpack it. We asked staff to be critical readers of our draft report and some of the feedback was we'd not foregrounded the fun, the everyday 'being together', the kids' strengths and staff achievements. Obviously, it's not all restraint and reflection. But it felt important to show the subtle hard work staff and children are doing, managing conflict and the potential for violence and not colluding with it in any form. So many of the children have been subject to or witnessed domestic and other forms of violence and harm, including Ethan. Schön captures the specificity of the reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action undertaken by different 'applied' professionals and wants to valorise the knowledge it generates. Specialist teaching assistants and therapeutic care practitioners, who are often not qualified to degree level, can get positioned as 'naturally able' and working from love or intuition - their care work, and the children, idealised and sentimentalised. In fact, the work is highly skilled, and it's difficult emotionally, and I hope the crafted vignette shows that places to reflect, particularly collaboratively, are central to supporting practice development.

Earlier in the paper, we spoke about the 'frames' that make practice highly context- and task- specific and the Mulberry Bush use psychodynamic, trauma-informed and therapeutic community frames. And your thematic analysis didn't step outside that.

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Can you say something about that? I guess these are not the only perspectives on this material.

Yes. For example, I'm aware your work uses a narrative systemic perspective, and the 'social GRACES' frame¹, and this vignette is shot through with power dynamics relating to gender and age, between Jack and Megan, and Ethan and Cherize, the latter potentially including race – Ethan is white and Cherize, black; the members of staff in these extracts, and myself, are white. I am confident these dynamics would've been thought about in the organisation's reflective sites. But we were exploring how the organisation's main conceptual resources – psychodynamic, the therapeutic community heritage – were used to support the work. Megan's assignment used psychodynamic ideas to support her in seeing Ethan's reactions systemically rather than personally and help her feel safer about the internal disturbances created by the work. Jane would've used them too to avoid 'splitting' between the two staff members disagreeing over the room trashing; Jack was asked to question his defensiveness. Therapeutic community values foreground critical friendship, personal agency and freedom to challenge, including those above you in a hierarchy. Actually, the Mulberry Bush's 'Team Teach' training for positive behaviour management and restraint is cognitive behavioural and staff easily blend this with the psychodynamic and TC approaches without the 'culture wars' that have occurred in academic or mental health contexts – bearing out Schön and Rein's point about pragmatism.

Undocumented young people: narrative of a research interview

I first met Muhammed when he was 14 and started to attend the Youth Club at the Centre where I worked. He had arrived alone from Afghanistan and was in the care of Social Services as an 'Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Minor.' When I met with him for the research interview, he was 22 years old and living with 'no papers', at

¹ "Social GRRAACCEEESSS gender, geography, race, religion, age, ability, appearance, class, culture, ethnicity, education, employment, sexuality, sexual orientation, spirituality" (Burham 2012 cited in Totsuka, 2014: 86 - 87)

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immediate risk of deportation if he came into contact with authorities. We'd arranged to meet at the entrance to the university building on Sunday. As we walked through the empty campus, we chatted casually about how many years had passed since we'd last seen each other at the community centre.

As we entered the room and sat down at the large table the initial lightness of reconnection disappeared. As I talked through the consent form Muhammed sat slumped in the chair, a heaviness and world weariness about him, his response a flippant 'I don't care.' It was difficult to engage him in conversation and he seemed reluctant to speak. After about 15 minutes of trying to find a conversational entry point, I tried a different approach, offering him an opportunity to exit instead:

YD: Muhammed, you know you don't have to talk to me just because James asked you...

MU: That's fine. I just thinking there's immigration. [*Laughs properly*] Looks like immigration.

YD: Does it feel like an immigration interview?

MU: Yeah.

When Muhammed said "looks like immigration" I was horrified. I had designed the research project to be based on collaborative 'research meetings' led by the participant rather than interviews led by the researcher. I had intended that the project would embody the very opposite of the immigration system "that depersonalises, demands justification of people's experiences, and reinforces notions of power and non-choice" (Lee, 2012: 2). Yet for Muhammed this 'meeting' looked just like all his other interviews, with the Home Office, Social Services, solicitors. In that moment I was disappointed, my own ego bruised by the fact that he couldn't see my attempts to be different. I had brought fruit and offered tea, but I had also sat opposite him at a large table in an institution and was asking questions. For me the questions were an attempt to engage in ordinary conversation about his everyday life; I asked about work, family, home. But for Muhammed all these questions could just as easily have been for immigration purposes; "I'm illegal now" he said.

Later, talking about his family he became tearful and put his head in his arms, collapsing onto the table. I felt the table between us marked the gulf in our experience. I wanted to offer comfort but didn't know how. We were both racialised as non-white, of Muslim heritage and from countries that had been colonised. But our migratory histories and present context were very different. I was born in the UK, a woman, older than him, I worked at a university whereas he found it hard to find secure work. Where I was conscious of these differences, I realised that I had mentally erased the invisible difference of 'immigration status' and all the losses and limitations of living with 'no papers'. I had mistakenly assumed that our previous history at the community centre would be enough for him to 'know' that I was not part of the immigration system. I recall struggling to manage my own feelings of ignorance, helplessness and inadequacy, worried that I had possibly inadvertently recreated a re-traumatising situation. Eventually I made him a cup of tea which he refused, but when I sat down beside him, he lifted his head and took the tissues I offered. We sat side by side for a long time, speaking occasionally.

After about an hour, Muhammed went outside to smoke. I followed him onto the balcony and as we sat together in the bright sunlight he told me that he had been worried that I might call immigration. Our meeting took place just days after the targeting of staff at a dozen Byron Burger restaurants in London which were part of planned raids by the Home Office. I was shocked and horrified that he thought I might betray his trust in this way and that he had been worried that the meeting might have been a trap.

Sitting inside, separated by a table, with the audio recorder set to capture our conversation I realised I had unintentionally set up a space which, for him, replicated the many meetings with authorities that required him to tell a linear, factual, singular story to access resources, support and protection. It was only when I moved to sit alongside Muhammed and we sat in silence together that other stories and conversational entry points had the opportunity to emerge, and as Muhammed talked about his work as a tailor, showing me photographs of the intricate work he undertakes making adjustments to expensive designer clothing, we began to make a connection beyond the immigration frame, a connection in which Muhammed was in a position of knowledge and ability (Lee, 2018: 6).

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Later when he left the room and I followed, the balance of power shifted again, he was happy to talk but didn't want me to record anything. Moving outside, giving up the power to record and engaging in a more therapeutically focused 'moment by moment' altered the power dynamic, a slight but significant shift in the relationship. As we walked down the corridor after the meeting Muhammed appeared more relaxed, his posture was straighter, and he indicated that it had been good to speak. In turn I felt grateful to Muhammed, realising the very real risk he had taken to meet me and teach me what it meant to be deemed 'illegal'. When we exited the building, he was visibly relieved, commenting that there was no immigration, a stark reminder of his daily reality.

Narrative interview discussion

HP: You've described some of your reflection-in-action in the encounter with Muhammed - could you say something about your reflection-on action?

YD: Yes. I've thought a lot about my encounter with Muhammed and his comment 'this looks like immigration', the implications of that for my practice and the different levels and limits of our understanding. His comment makes me think of one commentator's description of the 'immigration line' as a marker of difference – I'll read it:

"The immigration line demarcates those lives that are endowed with the gift of citizenship and those lives that can be cut short with impunity." (Back, 2007: 31)

Muhammed drew my attention to that line. He made the difference between us visible because he's a person who runs the daily risk of deportation but I'm a citizen. There is a brutality in that which really hit home for me in that meeting. My previous encounters with Muhammed had been at the community centre. It was a psychologically safe space for the young people and the organisation was focused on helping them to secure status and rebuild their lives. As a researcher I was positioned differently and the power relations which shaped our knowledge and experience of the world were much more obvious.

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I wonder if you can say more about power, in relation to your encounter with Muhammed?

My thinking about power in this context draws on different perspectives. From a decolonial perspective it really highlighted my awareness of the way in which power differences are enacted through border control and how colonialism and racism, systemic injustices, continue to shape our lived experiences and relationships, and play out in everyday encounters. Decolonial and anti-colonial thinkers draw attention to the ongoing legacies of our colonial history and invite us to de-link from it. In practice this necessitates an active engagement with these issues, positioning ourselves to prioritise human dignity and justice.

How do you think power and trauma connect?

I've been thinking about the interplay between trauma and power. Trauma is a powerful force in therapeutic encounters, Poh Lin Lee argues that trauma 'does everything to disrupt the conversation' in an encounter and also, trauma happens *because* of power. And Michael White (2004) writes about 'double listening' – where you try to attend to the 'erasing' consequences of trauma by conversely making visible a person's history of skills and strengths. Poh Lin Lee speaks about 'moment by moment practice', as a counter to oppressive power.

I can see you tried to do that in the interview.

Yes, for example, I followed Muhammed outside, I gave up the power to record and I tried to engage in a more equal practice which could also be therapeutic and disrupt the dominant story - the 'immigration story', the 'trauma story'. These 'small acts' I hope enabled a process of co-constructing the story to be about capacity and ability. Muhammed talked about his strengths and the possibilities for his future.

I'm aware that the term, 'small acts' has been used in a number of different contexts

Yes, it's been used to explore the complexities of diasporic identities and everyday interactions. It resonates with thinking about resistance and survival and the scholarship of black feminists and feminists of colour including Audre Lorde, bell

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hooks, June Jordan and Sara Ahmed. They draw on their embodied experiences of power as a basis of knowledge. In their work, the detail of an everyday encounter is used to illuminate power relations and the ways in which knowledge and experience of the world are very specific to one's historical and geographical situation.

Conclusion

'Reflection' as a term is in danger of becoming superficial or even tokenistic if it floats free from the specificity of the practice task and context, although we do not agree with Graham Ixer's tongue-in-cheek comment about it not existing. Our aim has been to show how it is embedded in everyday professional practices and processes, through 'reflection-in-action', and subsequent 'reflection-on-action', often with colleagues.

Through revisiting the pioneering work of Donald Schön, and utilising examples from our own research practice, we have further shown how particular conceptual and practice frames usefully support professional actions in specific settings. Reflective practices, and reflexive processes, develop within, and contribute to, these frames. It follows therefore that reflective practice provision needs to be 'fit for purpose' and to complement other reflective work professionals are already doing *in situ*. Otherwise, there is the risk that reflective practice provision feels 'bolted on' or located within 'one-size-fits-all' interventions in a way that devalues on-the-job reflection. However, both practitioners and practice researchers need to be explicit about their conceptual and practice frames, with themselves and with their audiences, and to be able to interrogate these and justify their value.

Our research projects also aimed to be useful in practice and to service providers. Price et. al.'s (2020) report for the Mulberry Bush made a number of recommendations. These included being more explicit about the other, non-clinically derived modes of reflective practice in use alongside the psychodynamic reflective practice model and revisiting the purpose of 'reflective space' group facilitation and how to clearly separate it from a managerial function. Deveci's (2022) doctoral submission also made practice recommendations, including moving beyond one's

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narrow professional role and task in, for example, mental health screening or discussing educational progress, to 'listen to understand' what's *not* being said, to hear aspects of the young person's story that would otherwise be subsumed by the checklist suggested by the professional task.

In the 'narrative interview discussion' preceding our conclusion, Deveci began to explore the interconnections between trauma and power, noting Poh Lin Lee's (2017) argument that 'trauma happens *because* of power'. Whilst Price's conceptual and practice frames foreground mental health and trauma, and Deveci's, power (as a force of oppression and resistance), we are aware of the destructive effects of trauma on mental health, and of both the benign or marginalising and shaming effects of power. Following discussion, we recognise that our stories could each have been told from these alternative perspectives. In concluding, we suggest that dialogue and detailed examination of the particular facilitates the exploration of different, apparently 'obverse' points of view and supports in-depth reflective and reflexive practice, on the frontline and in research.

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