Afterword

Life of psy

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I call this afterword life of psy, partly to make a bad joke but more importantly, to highlight the way *Assembling Therapeutics* breathes new life into studies of therapeutics. In no insignificant way, this is because *Assembling Therapeutics* rigorously examines how the therapeutic lives are lived in different political, historical and national contexts, and professional and everyday lives. Reading the chapters in this ground-breaking book, *Assembling Therapeutics* made me excited as the authors in each chapter strip away the congealed taken-for-granted about therapeutic culture, practitioners, participants and practices. As Ariel Yankellevich puts it in his chapter, citing Aubry and Travis, a ‘canonical critique of therapeutic culture’ has emerged over the past 30 years, mostly from Anglo-American writers (2015: 10). In this view, therapeutic culture depoliticises, individualises, self-responsibilises and privatises. The effect of this proliferating critique has been to flatten differences across geographical and therapeutic contexts and approaches; erase the collectivism of therapeutic events; ignore the progressive potential of therapeutic politics; pathologise consumers and practitioners, most often women; denigrate culturally feminised practices; and evacuate people of any agency or critical insight.

This monolithic thinking arises because critiques rarely undertake ethnographic research and often neglect feminist studies of therapeutic culture. Research has tended to focus on the bird’s eye, macro view of therapy culture. As a result, the distinctiveness and contextual specificities of therapeutic practices get blurred, and newly emerging versions invisibilised. Thankfully, *Assembling Therapeutics* departs from these methodologies and offers a rich and stimulating collection of chapters which live up to the editors’ aim of decentring the US centric, deterministic and attenuated view of therapeutic culture and politics. A vital element in this insightful volume is the provision of close-ups of practitioners and participants, and their lived meanings, practices and motivations. Accordingly, many authors inhabit a position of what Steven Stanley and Ilmari Kortelainen in their chapter call the ‘sympathetic-critic’ in their analyses. Significantly too, chapters by Marjo Kolehmainen and Inna Perheentupa bring feminist perspectives, and histories to the fore, challenging the citational practices and taken-for-granted genealogies of therapeutic culture scholarship, and the assumed gender- and class-neutrality of therapeutics. Accordingly, the book

Assembling Therapeutics challenges what Tatiana Tiaynen-Qadir describes appositely as the ‘totalizing effects and normalizing power of a singular therapeutic culture’, and propels a fascinating and prescient study of therapeutic practices.

Epistemologies of the therapeutic

The book makes an urgent and significant contribution by developing practices of inquiry, methodologies and methods that go beyond the macro or the purely textual and provide new lines of empirical inquiry. To some extent, self-help books have become the poster-child for critiques of therapy culture, a gloss for the whole of therapy practices. In mobilising ethnographic, participant-observation and multi-method approaches, the book shifts the types of research questions being asked, moves forward empirical studies of geographical and therapeutic contexts, and lays out new research trajectories to the field. These methodological, empirical and theoretical developments matter as therapeutic approaches and power relations vary with histories, geographies, institutions and contexts, as Bondi and Fewell (2003) stressed over 15 years ago, and the introduction to this volume explains. Through these approaches, *Assembling Therapeutics* takes the field in genuinely new directions.

Tiaynen-Qadir notes in her chapter that ethnographic methods demand commitment, reflexivity and immersion, and we should note resources such as time and funding are not readily available in the accelerated university. But such engagement enables researchers to pay attention to verbal, emotional, affective and bodily reactions which underpin therapeutic events and experiences – what Tiaynen-Qadir calls an ‘ethnography of the tacit’. Accordingly, chapters deftly illustrate how the so-called ‘talking cure’ relies on affects, emotions and bodies, and as Kolehmainen gives a vibrant sense of, the bodies are not always human nor fleshy (see Kolehmainen, Stanley and Kortelainen and Peteri in this book). All of which raises incisive questions about what kinds of data we will need to trace therapeutic assemblages across other geographical contexts not included in the collection and those which coerce affects, emotions and bodies.

The book is enriched by the ways in which authors take the time to listen to and learn from practitioners of and participants in therapeutic practices. This is an important counter to the field because in spite of various calls to find out about practitioners’ meanings, motivations and methods, we still know very little as noted by the editors (see also Swan, 2008). But the sensibility in *Assembling Therapeutics* means we meet a panoply of practitioners: coaches, employed counselling professionals, psychotherapists, couple counsellors, mindfulness practitioners, and alternative medicine and new age practitioners working across different national and institutional contexts. In a similar vein, participants in therapeutic practices are often ignored, painted with a condescending broad brush, or represented by self-help book readers but one of the strengths of this book is that authors introduce us to the thoughts, feelings and experiences of choir attendees,

feminist trauma activists, migrant Christians, people suffering from depression and even academics!

An oft-trotted out aphorism is that the therapeutic industry is proliferating, but rarely do studies research the events, spaces and organising practices, through which the industry is proliferating. In contrast, *Assembling Therapeutics* gives a deep insight into therapeutic industry events such as seminars, lectures, training courses, conferences and workshops taking place in libraries, fairs, hotels and workplaces. Moreover, the authors' openness to what constitutes the therapeutic means we learn about new therapeutic spaces, such as churches, feminist trauma activism and uncanny experiences, which produce therapeutic effects less by design and more as 'by-products' (Tiaynen-Qadir, this book). In doing so, the book offers a rich and stimulating glimpse of 'actually-existing' therapeutic practices and leads the way in suggesting future therapeutic event ethnographies.

This book makes a welcome contribution to studies of mediated and textual therapeutics and how they produce investment, affect and identification. A most surprising textual archive comes in the chapter by Kia Andell, Harley Bergroth and Marja-Liisa Honkasalo, which analyses unsolicited letters about uncanny experiences sent to the researchers. Their rich chapter reminds us to consider the unexpected in our empirical work. Thus, Harley Bergroth and Ilpo Helén and Felix Freigang vividly trace 'therapeutic imaginaries' through promotional materials for digital therapeutic devices. In their auspicious chapters, Bergroth and Helén, Freigang and Perheentupa bring a much-needed analysis of digital and social media, underlining how technological affordances mediate therapeutic experiences. All of the chapters in the book profile the contradictions that undergird the therapeutic assemblages they analyse and in his analysis of social media, Freigang shows how a commercial digital device company produced social media through which unexpected therapeutic activism took place as consumers challenged mental health stereotypes and lack of funding of support services. Through these approaches, the chapters go beyond current studies of mediated therapeutics, often dominated by analyses of US television programmes, to highlight how new media promulgate cultural imaginaries, politics and versions of self-care. Such analyses offer a springboard for developing research on the technological affordances and mediated specificities of digital therapeutics.

Another contribution of the book is the presentation of data. Thus, many authors present fulsome verbatim quotations from their respondents and vivid, detailed field notes so that we can see the light and shade in people's meanings and practices in ways which break open rigid categories often found in critiques. Thus, in her chapter on the rise of corporate fun initiatives, Virve Peteri provides rich excerpts representing people's mixed experiences of fun spaces and practices. Kolehmainen underlines embodied knowledge production in her writing up regarding her ambivalence participating in relationship counselling events, in what she wonderfully describes as her 'sour' field notes. Drawing on interviews, Julia Lerner gives space in her chapter to let her respondents speak in some depth about their experiences of well-being and religion. In a similar vein, Andell, Bergroth and Honkasalo purposefully present one interviewee at a time

in their chapter to illuminate their individual stories and experiences of uncanny processes. Through these analytical practices, the book shows what is at stake in how we represent those who participate in therapy practices and how we can illuminate the processual and emergent in our studies.

The book raises timely insights about how to study therapeutic events, and raises fundamental questions about organising practices and who organises what type of events for which audiences through what kinds of practices and under what conditions. This is central to understanding the politics of therapeutics and hierarchisations of authority, expertise, resources and in the language of the book, assemblages of gender, race and class.

Category of the therapeutic

Another major contribution of the collection is that it expands our understanding of the category of the therapeutic, its ideals and teloi because authors unpack what therapeutic means to the people they interviewed, and processes, people and objects they observed rather than deciding *a priori*. As the chapters in the book detail, the canonical critique characterises the therapeutic as emotivist and confessional, typically viewed as degraded ways to perform the self; Foucauldian commentators differentiate the therapeutic through its discourses of autonomy, independence, detachment and self-improvement; feminists focus on its rhetoric of healing and coping; and many theorists posit self-transformation as a central leitmotif; while studies of mediated therapy see catharsis as the *opus operandi* (see Swan, 2010 for more discussion on definitions of the therapeutic). Some chapters in the collection build on these definitions as a point of departure from which they extend our understandings, while others directly challenge such depictions. A guiding premise of the collection, as the editors note in their introduction, is that it insists on the ‘multiplicity of the therapeutic, and how “the meaning of ‘the therapeutic’” itself shifts with shifting assemblages’.

In this regard, one of the strengths of the book is the analysis of how therapeutics emerge from non-secular practices (Stanley and Kortelainen, Lerner and Tiaynen-Qadir). In her chapter, Lerner defines the therapeutic through psychoanalytically informed leitmotifs: ‘the narrative of identifying problems, probing the unconscious, making connections with past events or even one’s childhood, and summoning the self onto a path of healing and the elimination of suffering’. But she shows that her interviewees co-mingle these ways of thinking with their religious commitments. Thus, in the context of their immigration to Israel, her Russian speaking interviewees merge what she refers to as a contradictory but meaningful, neoliberal religious-therapeutic subjectivity. The data in Tiaynen-Qadir’s chapter also shows how the therapeutic draws on the religious. In this case, research participants interlace religion, contemporary therapeutics and *therapeia* – old traditions of health of the soul and body in Finnish Orthodox Christianity. As part of her analysis, Tiaynen-Qadir insists on multiplicity – ‘various cultural therapeutics’ – some of which ‘challenge *secular* psychological narratives of the self’ and ‘reach out to the divine, within and beyond the self’ rather than reproducing

notions of self-optimisation. Her respondents are not simply assimilating psychology into Orthodox theology, but re-vivifying *therapeia*, which has resonances with self-help and New Age. Insightfully, she stresses that the term ‘therapeutic’ means distinct things to her respondents, some use it to refer to a secular sense of emotional well-being, while others, the effect of ‘sacred’ singing.

Life management practices become the focus of other fascinating chapters in the collection. Andell, Bergroth and Honkasalo understand the uncanny experiences of their letter-writers as therapeutic events because they form part of people’s existential repertoire, and are shot through with what they see as therapeutic ideas of comfort, care and healing. The uncanny experiences and their narration provide people with resources to make sense of human existence, and work as forms of self-care and care for others. Moving towards a very different kind of existential project, Bergroth and Helén’s chapter incisively shows how the therapeutic becomes a data-driven practice in digital self-tracking devices. Our therapeutic practices of knowing, transforming and improving oneself are re-shaped through metrics and quantification-based haptic and visual data. In this way, datafied life management conjoins somewhat contradictorily with a therapeutic ethos. They stress that the data devices are not just epistemic but ontological tools, inflecting relations of the self to the self, and enacting the self through self-tracking.

Freigang shows how *DepressApp*, a mood-tracking app for people suffering from depression in Germany, reinvents self-disclosure, a classic practice of therapy culture. The app replaces the traditional pen and paper therapeutic tools with digital journals – as he puts it, ‘swiping instead of writing’ – and reconfigures emotion management as people monitor, quantify, and visualise their mood shifts. The quantification of emotion has been part of the history of therapy culture but these chapters underscore how the digital transforms what constitutes emotion management (Shackhak, 2017). But a vital point made by Freigang is that the digital device produces its own affects, which place its user in a hopeful relation with the device but also in a wider economy of emotions and digital quantifications and images.

In a very different context, Perheentupa shows how feminist trauma activism against violence in Russia, at a time of regressive policies, combines therapeutic and political ideas. Charting the complex history of feminism and popular psychology in Russia, she underscores the importance of psychology as an epistemic resource for women who have survived violence and trauma and find it difficult to get professional therapy or support elsewhere. Furthermore, the feminists incorporate therapeutic elements such as testimony, witnessing and proactivity in their performances, bringing feminist principles in dialogue with therapeutic practices, in what she describes as ‘collective therapy’.

Selfhoods

The chapters contest another shibboleth of studies of therapy culture: selfhood. As the authors in the collection argue, therapeutic practices foreground notions of subjectivity and personhood and provide resources for self-formation. For critics,

the focus on the self leads to narcissism and atomistic individualism. The project in many of the chapters is to reconfigure how we understand therapeutic selfhood by foregrounding how non-humans live in therapeutic relations and de-centre the human self. The non-humans brought to our attention throughout the book vary in kind, order and capacity. In their chapter, Bergroth and Helén reveal how self-tracking takes shape through congeries of non-human and human bodies, digital and quantitative data, technological objects and the ideas of self-care. Deploying Deleuze's concept of 'dividualisation', they argue that self-tracking devices complicate traditional notions of holistic therapeutic selfhood in what they call 'fragmentary holism'. In this way, the self becomes a data assemblage and process. Their rigorous analyses add to debates about how psychological interiorities are being reconfigured from notions of depth and past memories to futures and anticipation. Freigang shows us how the non-human mobile and mood-tracking app he researched became a 'therapeutic companion' for people with mental illnesses and depression, physically *living* with his respondents to bus-stops, restaurants and waiting rooms. Indeed, marketers portray the app as a 'pocket therapist'. Its non-human affordance of portability means that it becomes an embodied part of the self, easily assimilated into everyday habits and spaces. But it is not just the app that makes up the therapeutic assemblage but also the diverse elements of the hardware of the mobile, the software programme, the data, social networks, media outlets and startup entrepreneurs.

Other chapters focus on the importance of affect and space. For instance, Kolehmainen describes how therapeutic practices of relationship counselling work through non-human bodies and impersonal flows of affect. As she writes, reconfiguring understandings of the therapeutic, 'a non-human-centred concept of atmosphere ... does not start with an 'I' but invites us to pay attention to the transpersonal, the intercorporeal and the more-than-only-human'. In their chapter on mindfulness, Stanley and Kortelainen foreground the concatenation of the body-mind of the mindfulness practitioner, lighting, seating and the space of meditation practice. Peteri underlines the significance of space in her discussion of corporate fun culture in designing so-called positive emotions through the set-up of office spaces, their décor and the provision of toys, bean-bags, slogans and TV references.

The book encourages us to think of the lives of non-humans, objects, spaces, representations and ideas and how they make therapeutics? How might access to such non-humans be unevenly distributed and with what effects? When might atmospheres not just turn sour but be unwelcoming or violent and for whom? How might spaces, seating and lighting assemble inequalities and oppression in enforced therapeutics for minoritised groups in prisons, hospitals, courtrooms and schools?

Assembling the therapeutic assemblage

This brings us to the exciting conceptual contribution of the book: its analytical lens of assemblage. Although, Rose (1998) mentions assemblages in his influential book, *Inventing Our Selves* on the 'psy-complex', few scholars have taken

up the cudgel until now (also see Tiaynen-Qadir and Salmenniemi, 2017). In the introduction the editors explain that assemblage thinking means understanding the therapeutic as a multifaceted collection of ‘ideas, practices, spaces, objects and bodies yielding multiple, contextually specific and sometimes contradictory effects’, which work processually, relationally and emergently to challenge universalistic, monolithic, static understandings of therapy culture. The chapters attend to these elements in different ways. It’s refreshing that authors are not doctrinaire Deleuze and Guattarian assemblage thinkers but mobilise different understandings of assemblage theorising from geographers, feminists and anthropologists, albeit influenced by Deleuze and Guttari’s notion of *agencement*, and put these in dialogue with other concepts such as affect. Through their detailed analyses, authors reveal different scales of assembling, and some show the linkages and exchanges between and across broader assemblages.

In conceiving of therapeutics as an assemblage of atmospheres, Kolehmainen highlights ‘connectivities’ and blockages between situational and material practices, affects, objects and bodies – non-human, non-organic, imaginary. She draws on assemblage thinking to underline how therapeutic events are not just ‘top down governance’ but ‘lived, networked, relational and embodied experiences’ that generate collective connections. Felling a number of taken-for-granted, she informs us that this shifts the focus from ‘the self to the collective, from advice-giving to experience, and from governmentality to lived experience’ and in so doing, challenges many of the shibboleths in the canonical critique.

Freigang reminds us that assemblages demand the active labour of humans and non-humans and several chapters focus on this, including that of Stanley and Kortelainen who reveal that mindfulness practitioners pull on various resources to make mindful-bodies and spaces. Suvi Salmenniemi, Johanna Nurmi and Joni Jaakola also attend to practitioners but about how they assemble what the authors call ‘personalised self-care packages’, a bricolage from elements from the New Age movement, alternative medicine, self-help, lifestyle, alternative health and new spirituality. These personalised assemblages help them to mediate the injuries of contemporary neoliberal work. Andell, Bergroth and Honkasalo focus on individual therapeutic assembling, not that of practitioners but of people who have experienced uncanny events, the narrations of which comeingle uncanny and other actants as ‘ways of “assembling” one’s life’. Lerner reveals how new migrants mobilise a ‘therapeutic-religious assemblage’ as a salve against their immigrant experience in the post-Soviet cultural context. Importantly, she stresses that they do this in situated, flexible constellations alongside neoliberalism.

Other chapters emphasise how therapeutics are assembled across cultural and social institutions, histories and transnational geographies. As a result, studies are grounded in specificities at the level of the therapeutic practices, national contexts and histories in ways which de-centre US theories and practices. Tiaynen-Qadir conceives of a ‘glocalized therapeutic assemblage’, bringing analytic attention to how the global and the local merge in embedded, historically situated interactions of human and non-human actors, which in her chapter includes the specificities of religion and psychology in Russia. In so doing, she vividly challenges the repeated

motif in the canonical critique of the relationship between US Protestantism and therapeutics. Stanley and Kortelainen argue that it is the ‘sheer multiplicity of the assemblage of mindfulness’ that accounts for its proliferation across so many social and cultural domains. Importantly, they remind us of the importance of histories to therapeutic assemblages highlighting how both early twentieth century British colonial expansion in Southeast Asia and the 1960s counter-cultural movement influenced the transnational appropriations of mindfulness ideas and practices. They ask us to think about the situated and the broader milieu.

Lerner coins the term ‘emotional socialism’ in direct opposition to Illouz’ (2007) EuroAmerican theorisation of emotional capitalism. She does this to underscore a different historical relation to psychology in Russia and the Soviet Union and foreground what she calls the Russian emotional style and its socialist inflecting. Central to her project is showing how ‘the global therapeutic language’ works alongside local discourses and ideals to shape newly emerging post-Soviet Russian versions of selfhood, emotions and personal relations. The chapter by Yankellevich asks us to reflect on how therapeutic practices are not just about assembling lives but about assembling a nation, asking us to reflect on the scales of assemblages. Writing specifically about coaching in Israel, he tells us that self-improvement discourses and practices play a critical part in the construction of national identities in the aftermath of neoliberalist reform.

Emergence and relational connectivity are two characteristics of assemblages which chapters bring out in their discussion. Freigang shows how affective intensities help the socio-material elements of mood-tracking apps assemble or disassemble as people invest hope in them. At the same time, this hope intensifies the affective flows that form part of an app’s assemblage. Peteri argues that the assemblages of corporate fun culture construct contradictions are always productive of new behaviours, expressions, actors and realities. Bergroth and Helén show that ‘the self’, the ‘therapeutic’ and the practice of ‘self-tracking’ are constantly being assembled from diverse elements. Rather than understanding self-tracking as therapeutic, they use assemblage thinking to show how self-tracking ‘becomes’ therapeutic in relation to the sociotechnical and political context in which it is practised. Importantly, Bergroth and Helén’s chapter underlines how therapeutic assemblages are related to other assemblages, in their example, personalised health care but provoking researchers of therapeutic to map other interconnected assemblages. For example, how does the state assemble therapeutics and through which other assemblages, institutions, representations and objects?

Therapeutic assemblage politics

How then to think about the politics of therapeutics? If we want to move away from the idea that therapeutics stop people from having critical thoughts, nuanced reflexivities and political inclinations, then how might we need to rethink therapeutics and politics? A popular vein of thinking insists that therapeutic practices deplete social critique, collectivism, critical capacities and possibilities for social change. The book roundly challenges this view. This is not to say that authors

are cheer-leaders for all aspects of therapeutic culture but rather that they plumb the nuances, contradictions and multiplicities of people's engagement with therapeutic ideas and practices. Moreover, if non-humans have agency then what does this mean for understanding the political? How do policies, reports, powerpoints, social media, psychological tests, therapeutic exercises, games, chairs, rooms and flipcharts capacitate and inhibit? How do bodily encounters make race, heteronormativity, class and gender? And as chapters deftly illuminate, through their stimulating analyses of self-care, embodied care, collective care, care for others, how can we reflect on the politics of care, when care and the labours of care are unevenly distributed by race, class and gender.

Some chapters offer clearer possibilities for more progressive politics than is often imagined in popular and theoretical critiques of therapy culture. Not all though. For instance, in the chapters on digital devices, and workplace fun cultures, authors point to oppressive effects. Although, as Freigang shows in his example of people with depression using social media to speak out against the structural constraints of psychotherapeutic care, these are not cut and dried. Indeed, all of the chapters stress the significance of contradiction and ambivalence.

A common critique of the depoliticising capacities of therapeutics is that they encourage people to take on a neoliberal subjectivity but Salmenniemi, Nurmi and Jaakola disrupt this view. After speaking with practitioners who mobilise therapeutic practices against alienation from work, the authors insist that they 'may also be mobilized to critique, contest and disengage from the destructive and exploitative effects of neoliberalism'. Their interviewees curate 'a package' of self-care practices, not simply to self-optimize, but to critique work and imagine alternatives. An important tool in their analytics is their holding onto contradiction and the possibilities of both and, as they make clear, therapeutic practices can reinforce neoliberal subjectivities *and* enable resistance, and this depends on how practices are assembled.

While Salmenniemi, Nurmi and Jaakola's chapter examines the politics of individual self-care and resistance, others question whether therapeutic practices generate social change. Thus, Yankellevich challenges 'the dichotomous view' that opposes 'the therapeutic ethos to a model of civic virtue or political engagement' (Illouz, 2008). He argues that the coaching enacted by middle-class Ashkenazim Jews does not always lead to a lack of political disengagement. His interviewees see individual self-development and social engagement as mutually reinforcing. He insists that coaching can promote a collectivist ethos to act for the common good when therapeutic neoliberal rationality works dialectically with local discourses of the self.

Feminist activism can be supported by therapeutic practices as Perheentupa shows in her chapter on trauma culture. Mobilising the term 'therapeutic politics' to challenge head on the idea that therapeutic practices are always politically denuded, she argues that it is the feminist agenda that promotes collective and societal responsibility and makes trauma therapy a collective radical politics. Indeed, her respondents see psychology as a useful form of knowledge to help them with experiences of violence and to initiate social change.

These chapters and others point to the collective experiencing and sociality of therapeutic events. Indeed, several chapters underline how collectivism and sociality are important to therapeutic practices, in contrast to the idea that therapy culture encourages an emotional detachment from others (Hochschild, 1994; Rimke, 2000). Even when individualistic discourses are mobilised, as Kolehmainen argues, therapeutic events can facilitate collective experience and connections.

Future research agendas: therapeutic lives

This collection of chapters stimulates us to reflect on other questions about politics. As someone who writes on gender, race, class and therapy culture, I was very pleased to read feminist-inspired reflections about social differentiation and inequalities. I would argue that one of the questions the book leaves us with is why women numerically dominate therapeutic practices, as practitioners and participants, as Salmenniemi, Nurmi and Jaakola note in their chapter.

Feminist theorists provide us with some useful pathways to follow. As I argue elsewhere (Swan, 2008, 2017a, b) women participate in therapeutic practices because they offer resources to cope with the impossible demands and costs of performing ‘successful femininity’; ‘propping up’ postfeminism; and undertaking the self-work to become the never-ending, self-improving, independent subject (Baker, 2010; Ringrose and Walkerdine, 2008). As chapters in this book suggest, therapeutic practices offer connections and sociality and, as has been argued, intimacy, friendship and emotional sustenance that was once met by friends and family (George, 2013; Swan, 2010). Indeed, in thinking about assemblages, it can be argued that psychological practices help people to paper over the cracks caused by the ‘fracturing and fragmentation of neo-liberal and globalised economies which are no longer willing to provide long-term forms of support’ (Walkerdine and Ringrose, 2008: 35).

Women looking for feminist support in their everyday lives can find elements in popular psychology. As chapters in the book suggest, feminism and psychology have long assembled, disassembled and re-assembled and have ‘rhetorical continuities’, for example, in notions about self-reflexivity and the family as sites of change (Illouz, 2008; Peck, 1995; Moskowitz, 2001). It has been argued that self-help is a proto-political form of feminism given its principles of self-determination and fulfilment and ‘might be tapped for a progressive, even a radical, agenda’ (McGee, 2005: 24; Crowley, 2011; Simonds, 1992). Feminists also insist that women readers of self-help books are critical of some of their ideas but value the personal disclosure and experiential knowledge of the authors, and how the books offer new gendered behaviours (Grodin, 1995; Knudson, 2013; McGee, 2005; Simonds, 1992).

In addition to the numerical feminisation of therapeutics, cultural feminisation of therapeutic culture needs interrogation. For instance, feminist researchers insist counselling and coaching draw on symbolically feminine styles of discourse. Such discourse encompasses sharing feelings and personal problems, being facilitative, empathetic and supportive, all modes of talking culturally

associated with women's intimate private friendships (George, 2013; Graf and Pawelczyk, 2014; Pawelczyk and Graf, 2011; McLeod and Wright, 2009; Swan, 2006, 2008, 2017a, b). While chapters in the book don't discuss feminine styles of talk, they point to other culturally gendered elements in therapeutic assemblages. For instance, Salmenniemi, Nurmi and Jaakola show that the feminised fragile vulnerable self, promulgated in neoliberal therapeutic practices and much critiqued in the canonical critique, challenges the go-getting, productive masculinised ideal worker in affirming ways. Kolehmainen notes the 'firm reliance' on gendered stereotypes and heteronormative values in the relationship counselling she studied. Peteri reveals how organisational fun culture in spite of its apparent associations with feminised aesthetics and emotions encourages masculinist forms of embodiment and laddish culture, reproducing old hierarchies. Putting it baldly, she writes that one man's fun culture is another woman's #metoo campaign.

But as some authors in the collection allude to and others, including me, have pointed out, therapy culture also has classed and racialised implications (Frantsman-Spector and Shoshana, 2018; Sa'ar, 2016; Swan, 2008, 2017a, b). Because of the book's focus on everyday lives, less attention is given to the ways in which racially minoritised and white working-class people are forced by state institutions and other assemblages to participate in therapeutic practices and reproduce themselves through therapeutic vocabularies and subjectivities (Lawler, 2005; Skeggs, 2004; Steedman, 2002). As Bergroth and Helén note en passant in their chapter, some people are 'obliged' to use self-tracking devices. In contrast, the middle-classes often take up therapeutic practices voluntarily. They have the time and income to be able to purchase self-improvement services (Swan, 2017a). Indeed, as I and others argue, middle-class, white women are culturally constructed as the ideal, self-transforming subject, having 'psychological capital' to effect self-work and self-transformation (Swan, 2017a, b; Baker, 2010; Blackman, 2004, 2005, 2007; Pfister, 1997). Seen as having this 'proper subjectivity', middle-class white women are positioned in opposition to racially minoritised and working white women, who are depicted as less willing, and less able to reinvent themselves, possessing shallow and more defective 'psychologies' (Lawler, 2005; Skeggs, 2002, 2004; Steedman, 2002). Therapeutic culture valorises the psychological and emotional styles of white middle-classness (Illouz, 1997; Lawler, 2005; Skeggs, 2009). Moreover, many tips and techniques point to problems and solutions that do not characterise the social situations or difficulties that are faced by racialised and white working-class women (Swan, 2017a).

In this vein, Salmenniemi and Adamson (2015) argue that popular psychology creates symbolic hierarchies by attaching value to middle-class women who are able to reproduce self-help tropes and narratives and thus construct Others as lacking value. Indeed, Mäkinen (2014) stresses that coaching aimed at people who are unemployed promotes the ideal subject of neoliberal individualism: someone who is autonomous, full of capacities and limitless power, who 'makes their own future'. But coaches need to acknowledge subjects' failures in order to sell their services and imply that no one's individuality is quite good enough.

Therefore, coaching for people who are unemployed exacerbates feelings of insecurity and precarity, feeding off failure and fear. And as Perheentupa points out in her chapter in this book, class affects who gets to access critical knowledge and professional help in trauma culture, noting that women from working-class backgrounds are at greater risk of gendered violence.

At the same time, as the book highlights so carefully, therapeutic practices throw up complexities and contradictions. Thus, Frantsman-Spector and Shoshana (2018) show how women married to prisoners manage to reject what they know is a white, middle-class therapeutic subjectivity into which social workers attempt to inveigle them. Sa'ar (2016) reveals that working-class Israeli women who taught middle-class emotional skills in an entrepreneur workshop enjoyed the opportunity to garner middle-class capital and collective sociality with each other.

In my own work, I have tried to explore the racialisation of therapeutic practices, especially the whiteness of psychological and emotional capital promoted by coaching in a British context. In particular, I draw on studies of digital whiteness and critical white critiques of psychological notions of emotional control, positive thinking and feeling and enterprise (Swan, 2017a, b). Indeed, in their chapter, Stanley and Kortelainen highlight the limits of diversity in the mindfulness practices they study, with mindfulness seen as race, gender and class neutral and universally accessible and inclusive.

I leave this afterword with a few lines of inquiry enlivened by this wonderful book and its welcome contributions to help us follow the lives of psy as it moves and emerges in new contexts, bodies, media and practices. How do racialisation, ethnicisation and whiteness play out in therapeutic assemblages and their politics in Finland, Israel, Russia and other national contexts (Hervik, 2018; Zakharov, 2013)? How might assemblage thinking trace how gender, race and class are assembled through connectivities and elements that make up therapeutics? What other kinds of non-humans – representations, documents, technologies, objects, bodies and spaces – come together to produce progressive and oppressive therapeutic politics? What kinds of labours are involved, by whom and what? How do minoritised groups harness assemblages to resist and reject? How are lives enabled, supported, inhibited and repressed through congeries of therapeutic affects, atmospheres, socialities, spaces and events?

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