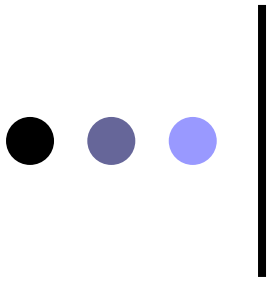# Metaphor and Empathy

Lynne Cameron

# Empathy

The work of empathy is precisely trying to imagine a view of the world that one does not share, and in fact may find it quite difficult to share.

Halpern & Weinstein, 2004, p. 581

## Motivations: Jo (2003)

in er,

the first few days after the bomb

just thinking

if only I could bring something positive out of this

and feeling very strongly

that my father was killed

because he was part of a conflict
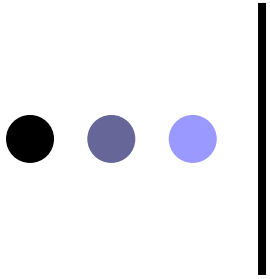
## Motivations: Jo (2003)

and I realised

I wanted to <u>hear</u> Pat's <u>story</u>

because I believe that

if anyone <u>opens up</u> and <u>shares</u> their <u>story</u>

ehm

it's very hard to hate

and my idea of Pat

was of someone

without much humanity

and I wanted to meet him

and <u>hear</u> his <u>story</u>

and <u>discover</u> his humanity

later on also <u>came</u> the idea that I wanted him

to <u>hear</u> my <u>story</u>
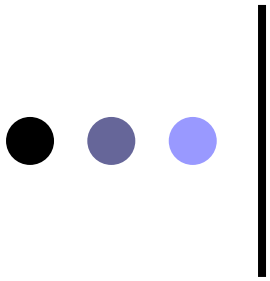
## Motivations: Pat (2003)

at the beginning
as a republican
… I felt obliged
as a republican
to sit down and talk about that
and against the <u>backdrop</u> of the political reasons
given a <u>platform</u>
for a republican <u>message</u>
that had been censored for decades
so
when offered an opportunity
to sit down
and talk about
what motivated you
then you should
avail of that
so that's <u>the way</u> I <u>walked into</u> it

# Motivations: Pat (2003)

but as I said

when you meet somebody

who's so <u>open</u>

to understanding your <u>perspective</u>

then you're obliged to somehow reciprocate

# Metaphor analysis

- find all metaphors
- group them together by their metaphorical meanings
- look for patterns of metaphor use
- interpret the link between metaphor patterns and people's ideas, attitudes and values

# What metaphor patterns can reveal

- difficult or critical moments in the talk, -- clusters of metaphors
- how speakers think about key topics -- 'framing' metaphors
- how speakers change their ideas -- the movement and changing of metaphors.

# systematic metaphor

*UNDERSTANDING THE OTHER IS A LONG JOURNEY ON FOOT TOWARDS THE OTHER*

- I've come a long way
- I find you very open
- it's been a very long journey
- one step at a time
- but also to understand where they're coming from
- meet the other halfway
- our journey began that moment and here we are
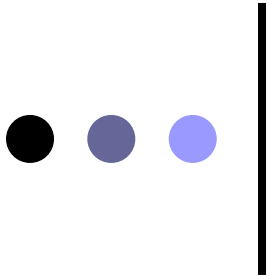- to take the next step of my journey.

# Framing metaphors

*RECONCILIATION IS A JOURNEY*

*RECONCILIATION IS LISTENING TO THE OTHER'S STORY*

*UNDERSTANDING THE OTHER IS CONNECTION*

*UNDERSTANDING THE OTHER IS SEEING MORE CLEARLY*

## *understanding the Other requires connection*

- o building bridges
- o breaking down barriers
- o being open

# building bridges

1-680  Pat    (1.0) <u>in</u> the er --
681           <u>the journey</u>,
682           (1.0) <u>coming ... to</u> <u>a bridge</u>,/
683           ... you [know].
684    Jo     [hmh]
685    Pat    ... with <u>two ends</u>,


2-573  Pat    all those <u>bridges</u> are there to be <u>built</u>

# From bridges to barriers

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 2-1633 | Pat | there's an inverse, |
| 1634 | | to that er, |
| 1637 | | ...(2.0) figure of speech |
| 1638 | | you know, |
| 1639 | | <u>bridges</u>. |
| 1640 | | ... <u>bridges</u> can be <u>built</u>. |
| 1641 | | ... and that is if you, |
| 1642 | | .. actively -- |
| 1643 | | er, |
| 1644 | | .. create, |
| 1645 | | er, |
| 1646 | | .. <u>distances</u>. |
| 1647 | | ... <u>barriers</u>. |
| 1648 | | ... or what are they? |
| 1649 | | they are <u>exclusions</u> |

# Not being open

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 2108 | Jo | .. if I was -- |
| 2109 | | ... was still angry. |
| 2110 | | (1.0) the only person I'd be <u>hurting</u>, |
| 2111 | | would be myself. |
| 2112 | | (1.0) you know. |
| 2113 | | (2.0) and, |
| 2114 | | (1.0) I would be <u>stuck</u>, |
| 2115 | | I would be <u>closed down</u>. |
| 2116 | | my heart would be <u>shut</u>. |
| 2117 | | ... and I [would've] <u>lost out</u>. |

# The removal of barriers allows connection

Jo        \<X where X> victims of all <u>sides</u> have been meeting,
            .. and --
            er,
            ... (1.0) that is just about,
            ... er,
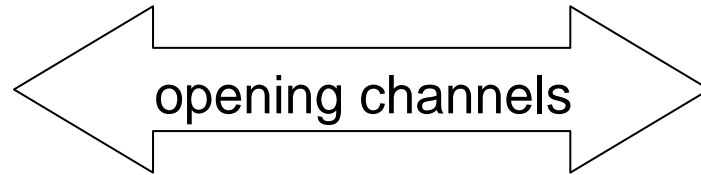            .. br- <u>breaking down barriers</u>,
            <u>sharing stories</u>,
            and --
Pat      hmh
Jo        ... and <u>through</u> .. experiencing each other's <u>stories</u>,
Pat      hmh
Jo        ... there's a real feeling of,
            ... <u>closeness</u> and humanity of everyone,

# Empathy: trying to imagine a view of the world that one does not share

Self

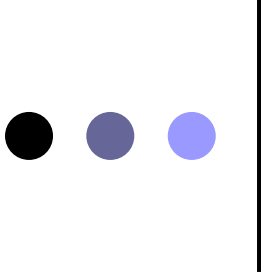opening channels

Other

connecting processes

# Connecting processes in Jo and Pat's talk

- imagining the other's feelings
- acknowledging the other's feelings
- presenting feelings and experience directly
- justifying choices
- inviting stories and explanations
- offering stories and explanations
- offering to answer questions
- allowing the other to use your metaphors
- accepting responsibility

# Imagining the Other's feelings

364    I know it must have been <u>uncomfortable</u> for you to listen to.

368    (1.0) that,

369    (2.0) Brighton,

370    (1.0) <u>from our perspective</u>,

371    was a justified act.


397    (1.0) there's that <u>cruel</u> word.

398    .. you know,

399    um,

400    <u>cruel</u> expression.

401    .. he was a legitimate <u>target</u>.

# Using the other's labels

| | |
|---|---|
| 402 | (2.0) meeting you though. |
| 403 | (1.0) I'm reminded of the fact that he was also a human being. |
| 404 | (1.0) and that he was your **father**. |
| 405 | and that he was your -- |
| 406 | (1.0) your **daughter's**, |
| 407 | ... **grandfather**. |
| 408 | .. and that's .. all <u>lost</u>. |
| 409 | (1.0) so, |
| 410 | (1.0) <u>as far</u> that's -- |
| 411 | (1.0) how -- |
| 412 | how can you er express the poignancy of that. |
| 413 | you know er, |
| 414 | (1.0) <u>there's no way around</u> it. |

# Accepting responsibility

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1420 | | bottom line is, |
| 1421 | | that is true. |
| 1422 | | .. I am the person who caused your pain. |
| 1423 | | .. even though it was a -- |
| 1424 | | ... it was the Irish Republican Army, |
| 1425 | | it was the Republican movement, |
| 1426 | | it was the Republican struggle. |
| 1427 | Jo | .. hmh |
| 1428 | Pat | that caused your pain. |
| 1429 | | but I can't walk away from the fact that it was -- |
| 1430 | | (1.0) I was directly, |
| 1431 | Jo | [hmh] |
| 1432 | Pat | [responsible] too for that. |
| 1433 | Jo | .. [[hmh]] |
| 1434 | Pat | [[I can't]] hide behind the -- |
| 1435 | | you know the -- |
| 1436 | | ... sort of, |
| 1437 | | the bigger picture. |

# Disarming metaphors

2-239    the more I <u>hear</u> of your <u>story</u>,
242       the less,
243       (1.0) I am <u>seeing</u> you,
244       (1.0) as the perpetrator.
245       (1.0) and,
246       .. the more,
247       ... I am <u>seeing</u> you,
249       (1.0) someone who's --
250       (3.0) had,
251       ... a lot of <u>struggle</u>,
252       (1.0) and a lot of reasons to do what you've done.
253       (2.0) and the more,
254       I am feeling,
255       (1.0) <u>part of</u>,
256       ... that <u>struggle</u>.

# Adopting the Other's metaphor

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1142 | Pat | how do you <u>put it</u>, |
| 1143 | | er, |
| 1144 | | (2.0) maybe that's <u>part of</u> <u>healing</u> too, |
| 1145 | | .. my <u>healing</u>. |
| 1146 | Jo | your <u>healing</u>. |
| 1147 | | .. [yeah]. |
| 1148 | Pat | [yeah]. |
| 1149 | | (1.0) you know, |
| 1150 | | er, |
| 1151 | | (2.0) it's -- |
| 1152 | | er, |
| 1153 | | <u>something</u> I have to <u>go through</u>. |
| 1154 | Jo | ... hmh |
| 1155 | Pat | ... if I'm going to sort of -- |
| 1156 | | er, |
| 1157 | | (1.0) <X really X> retain my humanity. |

# Empathy: trying to imagine a view of the world that one does not share

Self    opening channels    Other

feeling with

connecting processes

understanding
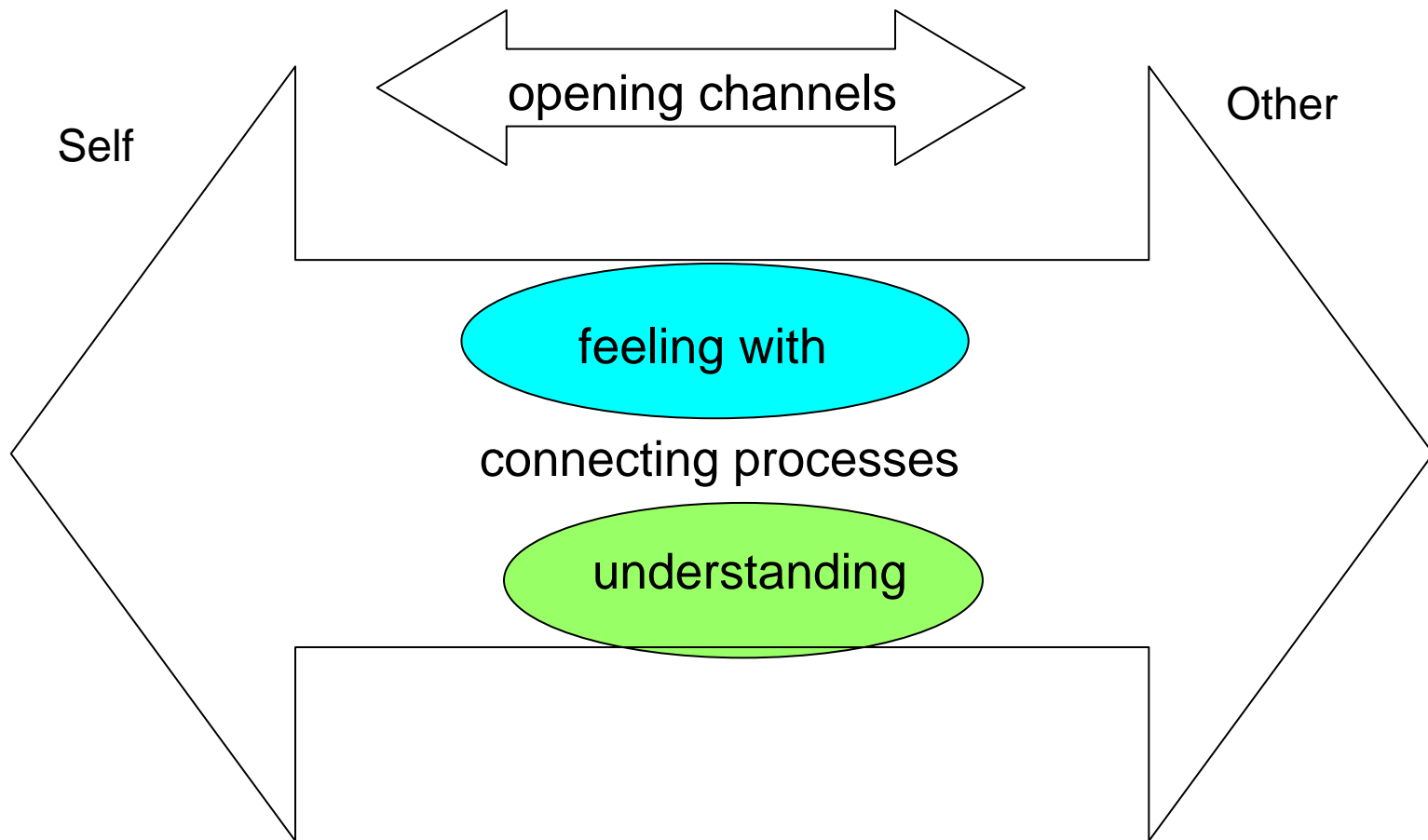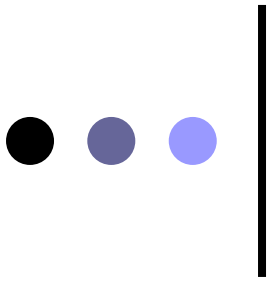
Imagining what it is like to be someone other than yourself is at the core of our humanity. It is the essence of compassion, and it is the beginning of morality.

Ian McEwan,

*The Guardian*, 15 September, 2001.