Exploring narrative practices within a Christian context: Identifying the core elements of narrative practice for an emerging model of training, education and formation of Christian pastoral carers and counsellors.

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ABSTRACT

Christian theology and ministry are located and operate in a postmodern context that often challenges traditional structures but also opens up new possibilities. Given that narrative therapy is exercised in a similar context it challenges dominant knowledge and brings new perspectives to practice within the therapeutic disciplines. Through questionnaire, interviews and focus group, and with the application of grounded theory, this research explored how practitioners integrate narrative principles within Christian and pastoral care and counselling. Specific expressions of theology, values and spirituality were considered.

As a supplementary task, the research also explored how the core elements of narrative practice could be used for the training, education and formation of future Christian and pastoral carers and counsellors. The findings indicated an educational model that generates a ‘space’ where both teachers and students collaborate pedagogically and co-construct the curriculum. It is also argued that narrative practices can enrich Christian and pastoral settings through offering an alternative to over-professionalised models of community and the psychopathologising of people.

This alternative empowers subjective voices, invites considerate use of language and suggests working with identities rather than selves. It favours community rather than individual services by applying a narrative, multi-storyed and dimensional view of human experiences on the common journey in the desert of otherness.
DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

This thesis, submitted for assessment, is the result of my own work. No unacknowledged assistance has been received in its planning, drafting, execution or writing. All sources on which it is based have been acknowledged in writing, as has the supervision I have received in the process of its preparation.

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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The background narrative of this research

This research emerges from a personal narrative (what a surprise!). For over twenty years I have studied and practiced various psychotherapy approaches, integrating that knowledge and experience within Christian and pastoral counselling frameworks and practices. Questions were raised for me when I came across postmodern influences on therapy work in the form of cybernetics of psychotherapy, collaborative therapy, narrative therapy, constructivist therapy and partly, solution-focused therapy. I became interested in how all the new interpretations of the world and possibilities of working with human persons reflect on the context of Christian values, beliefs and theology.

My homeland Croatia is by majority a Roman Catholic country. The Croatian Bureau of Statistics presents the following data from the 2001 census on religious demographics: Roman Catholic 88.0 %, Orthodox 4.4 %, Muslim 1.3 %, non-declared 2.9 %, atheist 2.2 %, others 1.2 % (among them the protestant denominations). Encounters with postmodernity offer no easy journey. Joseph Ratzinger’s allusion to a “dictatorship of relativism” is relevant and reflects former Pope Benedict XVI.

Today, having a clear faith based on the Creed of the Church is often labeled as fundamentalism. Whereas relativism, that is, letting oneself be ‘tossed here and there, carried about by every wind of doctrine’, seems to be the only attitude that can cope with modern times. We are building a dictatorship of relativism that does not recognize anything as definitive and whose ultimate goal consists solely of one’s own ego and desires.¹

In a religio-cultural sense Croatia is not dissimilar to Italy. At a recent European Conference of the Association of Christian Counsellors (ACC) held in Geneva, Switzerland in 2012 it was noted that ACC Italy has only 8 or 9 accredited Christian counsellors. Despite evidence of future applications, the number of licensed Christian counsellors is extremely low compared to the United Kingdom (380 accredited members and 1900 in total), France (80 members), Swiss

Romande (60 members) or Germany (where only 13 accredited counsellor training schools exist with about 40 accredited members). At the conference it was obvious that communicating the need for formal counselling is not easy in cultures that do no accept the need for this practice.

Within Croatia and other similar countries one of the challenges for young Christians studying psychology is balancing their new learning with their theology. The evangelical/protestant churches are suspicious of psychology and the challenge they perceive that it poses to faith. On the other hand, the Catholic Church has adopted the secular standards of Italy, which are unsympathetic to faith unless it is mentioned in the initial counselling contract. Despite some small signs of progress, the process of integrating faith into therapy in Italy is rather slow. This describes the situation in Croatia, where the context of a Roman Catholic majority determines the perception of pastoral counselling. It is estimated that only about 1% of believers are within an evangelical/protestant group but they appear to be much more familiar with the topics and concepts of pastoral counselling and spiritual care. In 2005, in response to this situation, I initiated the first Masters level program (and still the only one) in Christian counselling at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Osijek, Croatia. The students came from Romania, Ukraine, Belarus, Serbia and Croatia, and in the years that followed it began to expand to other countries in the region. This situation represents the future context of my work that also forms a strong part of the rationale for this research. The existing Masters program logically requires an ongoing research component and a supply of teachers who are able to advance such a requirement and extend the research base of current studies in our own context.

In Croatia, Christian and pastoral counselling is in its infancy. There is a lack of literature, research and training for the small group of practitioners. The major significance of this research is, therefore, to work toward a model of training, education and formation of the target group based on the inclusive ground of the newest developments in the counselling field.

The literature review reveals a tendency towards comparing Christian and pastoral counselling services with secular professional and occupational standards. I welcome the many positive
contributions to educating better informed and skilled practitioners. However our current postmodern context is more uncertain and less prescriptive about all-embracing absolute truths or answers in any given field of human thought or agency. Therefore, what are the effects on Christian values and services in pastoral counselling? To what degree are postmodern ideas threatening to Christian pastoral counselling practice or do they open up new opportunities? This research will focus specifically on the narrative approach as one representative of postmodern ideas.

The preliminary literature search that follows also describes the growing interest in narrative therapy. However, there is a lack of research about how Christian practitioners view the use of the narrative approach and limited work on its application in developing educational models for Christian pastoral counsellors. This is particularly true for nearly 90% Catholic Croatia.

1.2 Relevance and importance of the study

(i) Research context

Why focus on Australia? Australia, together with New Zealand, is the major ‘birth place’ of narrative therapy and is also a place where narrative therapy has continued its development with energy, creativity and therapeutic interest. Therefore, as a place of origin and contemporary growth it makes Australia one of the most relevant contexts for conducting a research project on narrative practice. Importantly, the way a narrative approach is assessed and used in Australia and New Zealand is somewhat different to other parts of the world and this makes the research potentially more faithful to the genuine roots of the practice. This offers a legitimate and indigenous foundation for the exploration of the interrelationship between narrative therapy and Christian and pastoral counselling that is at the core of this

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3 In Europe, narratives within constructivist psychotherapy are still used from the expert position of the therapist: “The therapist’s understanding of the constructs with which the clients organise their experience of the world runs parallel to its inclusion in a set of professional constructs.” Gabriele Chiari and Maria Laura Nuzzo, Constructivist Psychotherapy: A Narrative Hermeneutic Approach (London: Routledge, 2010), 112.
research. In Australia and New Zealand a narrative approach within Christian and pastoral contexts has been used for decades. This makes Australia a valuable and primary resource of accumulated knowledge, research and experience for this research.

(ii) **Scope of existing research**

It could be expected that many literature sources would follow the fact of a long-term use of narrative therapy in a Christian setting. This is not the case. Models and applications of a narrative approach will be detailed later, in contexts besides those of Australia, New Zealand and Africa. Also, in the reviewed, available literature, some experiences have been shared and suggestions made about the advantages of using narrative ideas in pastoral settings. However, it appears there is little research about narrative therapy’s use in the training, education and formation of Christian and pastoral carers and counsellors.

(iii) **Narrative in various general contexts**

Why narrative? Throughout history we have been surrounded by narratives and we now live amidst narratives believed to be uniquely ours. Narratives are woven through every aspect of human existence. It could be assumed that narratives are only to be found in their ‘natural environment’ of literature, music, theatre, movies, art or history, but various disciplines such as linguistics, psychology, sociology, anthropology and many other scientific fields have also brought narrative aspects into the focus of their research. The primary focus of this research lies within practical theology, and its application will be found primarily in the same context.

1.3 **Philosophical, theological, scientific, professional and contextual background**

a. **Postmodern philosophical background**

Narrative therapy is usually considered as one of a group of postmodern therapies resting on the ideas of Foucault, Lyotard, Derrida and social constructionism. Postmodernism, after hope and enthusiasm filled modernism, brought a turn toward scepticism, subjectivism and relativism. Millard Erickson sums up postmodernity, stating that “what really counts is

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personal experience.” He argues that the problems humans face today can potentially be solved by a “minimization of knowledge.” During the period of modernity, academically educated persons, after completing their study, would be seen as a reliable source of knowledge. Yet today, writes Erickson, “opinions count more,” people feel rather than think about what is happening and there is “a reduced sense of commitment.”

‘Erikson suggests three features located in the roots of postmodernity that are relevant to research on narrative therapy as employed by Christian or pastoral counsellors. They are as follows.’ (1) The rejection of essentialism where meaning or reality may have numerous possible bases. Essentialism (or logocentrism) views the world as anteriorly structured and formed while postmodernists like Derrida see it as formless until people structure it with activities according to their intentions. Truth therefore does not exist independently of the knower, so the knower possess the truth which is a product of his/her historical and cultural situation. (2) The rejection of universal explanations with “profound aversion to all-inclusive explanations or metanarratives.” Every “set of beliefs contains contradictory factors” (citing Derrida) and the goal is deconstruction, which is neither construction nor destruction but “dis-assembling of that which has been constructed.” (3) Meaning is subjective and formed by community, so truth in objectivism is understood as “correspondence with reality" and in postmodernity truth is understood as "what is good for us now to believe" (citing Rorty).

Constructivism, contrary to behaviourism and programmed instruction, states that learning is an active, contextualised and constructive process where people construct knowledge rather than acquire it. Through social negotiations people continuously test their personal hypotheses, interpret them, and from them construct their personal knowledge. Every new piece of information is linked to the past experience and prior knowledge of the person that is embedded in her or his own culture. Social constructionism claims that all knowledge is socially constructed, one of the cornerstones of narrative therapy.

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6 Erickson, The Postmodern World, 27-28; 32.
7 Erickson, The Postmodern World, 31.
8 Erickson, The Postmodern World, 36-55.
b. Narrative and theology

This brief survey outlines the salient elements of narrative theology which have made their mark especially within Protestant theology. Yale Divinity School is considered to be a seminal place for the development of narrative theology. George Lindbeck, H. Richard Niebuhr, Hans W. Frei, and later Stanley Hauerwas are main representatives of the school. They argue for a narrative structure of biblical stories and Christian faith as the foundation for systematic theology rather than the reduction of texts according to rational and general propositions. This is a postliberal shift that aims “beyond the rationalist, individualist, and romantic focus of liberal theology” and which is returning “to a focus on narrative, tradition, and community,” viewing Christian faith as a “language of community.”

H. Richard Niebuhr advocated for ‘historical relativism,’ claiming that all forms of knowledge depend on the observer’s point of view, particularly in relationship to time and space because not only is a man in time but time is in man. Niebuhr resolved the dichotomy between ‘subjective’ and ‘objective’ historical faith by distinguishing observed and lived history. Observed or external history values the importance, impact and weight of events whereas lived or internal history values quality. Accordingly, revelation is placed in history located within personal histories in the context of communities who express it through stories and symbols. Subsequently, narrative theologian George W. Stroup emphasised that narrative theology “is not simply a matter of storytelling” but recognises that Christian faith is rooted in particular historical events transferred through Christian Scripture and tradition as historical narratives. These narratives are foundational for a Christian understanding of God’s grace and nature, and are redemptive when appropriately applied to personal identity and existence.

Stroup suggests that existential questions about Christian identity and the meaning of revelation are at the centre of Christian faith, focusing on the first question in Jesus’ inquiry: “But who do you say that I am?” (Matt. 16:15, Mark 8:29; Luke 9:20). The response marks a

person’s understanding of Jesus’ identity and from there the nature of discipleship. The second question is about the revelation of Jesus’ divinity and him being proclaimed as “the only begotten Son of God” which, again according to the answer given, critically forms the personal identity of a believer and forces him/her to live a different and changed life as a Christian in the world. That gives Christians freedom not only from everything but for a certain way of life, of loving God and other people. Ceasing to be shaped by this knowledge of God, explains Stroup, can exacerbate problems and confusions in Christian identity.

Catholic author, Alexander Lucie-Smith engages narrative theology in relation to moral theology. Narrative theology is one that starts not with abstract first principles, but with a particular story; it is inductive rather than deductive. The story it examines is found, or ‘embodied’, in a community’s tradition, and is usually taken to sum up or encapsulate the community’s beliefs about itself, the world and God.

For Lucie-Smith divine revelation might be seen rather as a narrative than as a set of abstract principles and he is concerned about the universality of morality. He expresses his belief that if we accept narrative as the “fundamental category in ethics and moral theology, and by extension the idea that narrative is only nurtured in specific communities and traditions, then, it seems, we are abandoning any idea of morality as being universally valid.”

He analyses three models of narrative theology as a basis for narrative moral theology and by extension, serve to enhance our understanding of narrative therapy in a context of faith development, formation and education. Firstly, narrative theology is firmly rooted in community and tradition and cannot exist independently of them. Secondly, John Rawls’ view of narrative theology suggests narrative embodies a way of reasoning which is more or less universally applicable and can exist in variety of settings. Finally, Saint Augustine’s use of narrative sees a person rooted and embedded in a particular history, time and culture. This

15 Stroup, The Promise, 21.
17 Lucie-Smith, Narrative Theology, 60.
18 Lucie-Smith, Narrative Theology, 73-121.
provides a “model of narrative that transcends its origin” and holds out the promise that narrative can serve to establish “universal moral norms.”\(^{19}\)

Moral theology is not just concerned with moral norms but also with personal stories, writes Lucie-Smith. Narrative theology therefore gives context to moral norms outside of which they would have only limited sense. Narrative not only helps us to explicate meaning or application of moral norms but it is not subordinated to moral theology. Narratives are “in the state of becoming rather than finished products” so a note of caution is necessary when using them in the moral context.\(^{20}\) Lucie-Smith proposes a relationship between morality and narrative that is revealed in moral judgement. Narratives provide the language, the ethical language even, to express the moral concepts and what is meant by good, making this ‘good’ real enough to be able to discuss it and providing therefore “a model of ethical reasoning.”\(^{21}\)

For Lucie-Smith, narrative can help us to handle experience but cannot “utterly tame” all of it and there is always something that will remain beyond. There is more than one way to understand any particular narrative(s) and thus we liberate our thoughts rather than enclose them. Narratives form our identity but this depends to a large extent on culture but also in many aspects remains our free choice. Lucie-Smith concludes that it is not by turning to particular narratives that the universality of the truth must be renounced but just the opposite is the case and when considering together both concrete and narrative “we discover universal moral truths that we did not create and which call our very existence into question.”\(^{22}\)

For German Catholic theologian, Johann Baptist Metz, the primary duties for the theologian in the postmodern era are to “protect narratives from distortions … decode dogmas into once again dangerous memories … [and] use methods of inquiry that highlight the political.” Protecting narrative involves honest retelling of the Jesus Story, while understanding the Biblical text in the original context, understanding the historical Jesus and the Jesus of faith and keeping alive and interpreting the memories of those who came before us by preserving

\(^{19}\) Lucie-Smith, *Narrative Theology*, 165.  
\(^{20}\) Lucie-Smith, *Narrative Theology*, 215.  
\(^{21}\) Lucie-Smith, *Narrative Theology*, 216.  
\(^{22}\) Lucie-Smith, *Narrative Theology*, 219.
their stories as “dangerous memories,” especially the stories of pain and suffering that help society prevent the repetition of mistakes.\textsuperscript{23} Decoding dogma brings dogma into contact with human experience today, along with stories of how dogma has been experienced in the past, ready to shape hope for the future. Such approaches are helpful in creating frameworks and scaffolding that enable narrative therapy to encourage thinking that liberates, explores and reimagines. Theology and therapy can inform each other.

c. Narratives within scientific disciplines and philosophy

Neuroscientists have found that the human brain is critically wired to narratives in creating a sense of reality. Marie-Nathalie Beaudoin and Jeffrey Zimmerman explored the interrelationship between findings in neuroscience and therapeutic conversations with a White/Epston’s narrative therapy focus.\textsuperscript{24} The brain “is an experience encoding device with a particular bias towards retention of what is often called ‘negative affect’”\textsuperscript{25} which in turn is “believed to be associated with the survival of our human species, whereby experiences of danger can be perceived as more important to retain than ‘positive’ experiences.” Neural networks that are associated with “problem related experiences” are more developed than those associated with “preferred experiences.” Thus, the prefrontal cortex that creates an explanation out of our experiences more often ends up with “problem-saturated stories” or a “problem identity.” Further, from a survival mode driven from the limbic system of our brain, or more precisely from the amygdalae, the more developed and better established neural pathways associated with negative stories will be rapidly activated when triggered by emotionally loaded situations. Beaudoin and Zimmerman note that the practice of re-authoring “directly reinforces faint but preferred neural pathways” helping them become more developed and, by frequency of application, overtaking dominance over negatively charged stories. However, the narrative practice of questioning and conversation toward “unique outcomes” has to be affective or “preferred affect-infused” rather than cognitive and


\textsuperscript{25} Quoting: Kensinger (2007); LeDoux (1996, 2002).
behaviourally based. Such an approach further activates memory and richer narratives, an important theme for this research. Beaudoin and Zimmerman’s summary highlighted some of the overlap between narrative therapy and brain research, and emphasized the importance of “affect infused” unique outcomes. Bringing forth feelings and details about experiences can render preferred identity conclusions more accessible on both an experiential and physiological level.

Computer scientists Michael Travers and Marc Davis use the term “narrative intelligence” in the context of development and research into artificial intelligence. Writing in the same context, note that “people are narrative animals” and that we “furnish our worlds” with meaning and do so through stories. What Schank and Abelson offer in their essay is a representative view of general and basic assumptions about narratives from many other authors. They argue that stories about one's experiences, and the experiences of others, are the fundamental constituents of human memory, knowledge, and social communication. This argument proposes that: virtually all human knowledge is based on stories constructed around past experiences; new experiences are interpreted in terms of old stories; the content of story memories depends on whether and how they are told to others, and these reconstituted memories form the basis of the individual's "remembered self." 

Psychologists Sarbin and Bruner describe the concept of narrative partitioning while inaugurating narrative psychology and they elaborate on how humans process intentional actions by assimilating them into narrative structures. Psychologists therefore speak of a ‘narrative self.’ Bruner proposes that there is no such thing as “an intuitively obvious and essential self to know” but rather there is a “narrative art” in our constant process of

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constructing and reconstructing ourselves “to meet the needs of the situations we encounter, and we do so with the guidance of our memories of the past and our hopes and fears for the future.”34 Such a telling is expressed by making up stories that accumulate over time, yet they become out-of-date and then we must adjust them again to new circumstances. In this narrative art of self-making stories our memory falls a victim, says Bruner. It is not because of our inability to speak the truth any more but because, after living through new experiences and being in a new context, the new stories will be told from a new perspective. This self-making happens from both inside and outside: inside from our subjective world of memory, feelings, ideas and beliefs and outside from the esteem and expectations of others. These narrative acts are guided by cultural models of what selfhood might, should or shouldn’t be.

However, when telling others about ourselves we also include what we think that others think we ought to be like. We eventually follow this pattern even in our own inner self-talk about ourselves, where “self-making and self-telling are about as public activities as any private acts can be.”35 Self-telling is in most cases provoked by particular happenings or episodes that are in relation to a longer-term and larger-scale concern. Self-definition and self-making through narrative happens restlessly and endlessly from outside in and from inside out, like a dialectical process and a balancing act, a dynamic we see later in research interview respondents. Bruner finds strong evidence for his claims in a neurological disorder described as “a severe impairment in the ability to tell or understand stories,” called dysnarrativia. One symptom seems to be the loss of a “sense of self” and a “sense of other.” For Bruner such evidence appears to confirm how “the construction of selfhood ... cannot proceed without a capacity to narrate.”36 Leaning on this perspective, the self of the Christian identity is revealed as thoroughly embedded in a narrative.

Narrative theories of personality see humans as storytellers by nature. Other researchers have explored these concepts. For the purposes of this research psychologist Dan McAdams is probably the most relevant. McAdams developed “Personal Narrative Theory” with the

35 Bruner, The Narrative Creation, 5-6.
concept of a “Life Story Model” of identity or a “Narrative Identity.” He argues that human identity “takes the form of an inner story, complete with setting, scenes, character, plot, and themes.” He defines narrative identities as “psychosocial constructions co-authored by people and the cultural context within which their lives are embedded and given meaning.” A person’s narrative identity is therefore a key component of the individuality of a particular person, a particular family or a particular society in a particular historical moment. McAdams builds on Erikson’s concept of the fifth stage of development dealing with building ego identity versus role confusion. From there McAdams sees identity as “an integrative configuration of self-in-the-adult-world” where integration happens synchronically when identity integrates within the wide range of roles and relationships in the here and now, and diachronically, when separated self-elements come together into a meaningful “temporally organised whole.” He suggests that there is no identity prior to the period of emerging adulthood, which is a period from the late teenage years to the mid-20s. The reason for that delayed identity construction, following Erickson, is because “the integration of selfhood is not yet a psychosocial problem” for children and youth as it is destined to become within the emerging adult.

McAdams draws four implications that the work on narrative identity might have for narrative therapy: (1) “research and theory on narrative identity suggest that the kind of change that narrative therapy achieves has substantial effects on the very development of identity and personality;” (2) “work on narrative identity shows that therapists need to consider carefully the developmental dimensions of life stories;” (3) “a person’s narrative identity says as much about the person’s world as it does about the person;” and (4) “both narrative therapists and researchers would do well to think more carefully about what kinds of stories they hold out as psychological ideals.” Within this framework, other psychologists and philosophers consider narratives in their research. Psychologist Walter Fisher proposes a theory of human communication based on the concept of a person as *homo narrans*. He outlines a “narrative paradigm” which sees narratives as forms of communication, asserting that human

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communication is all about telling stories or reporting life events. French philosopher Paul Ricoeur writes about “narrative intelligence” and “narrative rationality” and he engages temporal dimensions of narratives in his three-volume work “Time and Narrative.” On a more personal level, Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor elaborates on our narrative identity stating “that we grasp our lives in a narrative” and that our lives “exist also in this space of questions, which only a coherent narrative can answer.” Our sense of good is therefore woven into our understanding as an unfolding story and our life always has a degree of “narrative understanding” that develops from an A – “what I am” to a B – “what I project to become.”

d. Narratives in counselling and psychotherapy

My experience of Christian and pastoral counselling identified an intention to integrate all the main counselling and psychotherapy schools and approaches in its work. It seems, however, that the general field of Christian and pastoral counselling has hesitated to integrate postmodern therapies, as, for instance, constructivist psychotherapy, collaborative therapy, cybernetics of psychotherapy, and narrative therapy, somewhat excluding Australia, New Zealand and Africa. Perhaps the reason lies in the complexity of some of the theories of these approaches and perhaps on the grounds of some incompatibilities with Christian values. However it is not clear why this has happened to narrative therapy as well especially when, by giving priority to the story, it seems that narrative therapy could fit well within a Christian context.

Postmodern therapies take into account narrative aspects of human experience, and Kenneth J. Gergen states that for “many constructionist therapists the concept of narrative plays a pivotal role.” Narratives are used in different psychotherapeutic settings such as: experiential psychotherapy, a relational constructivist approach; constructivist psychotherapy


41 Paul Ricoeur, Oneself as Another (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 143-144.


in general; psychodynamic psychotherapy,\textsuperscript{45} Cognitive Emotive Narrative Therapy (CENT)\textsuperscript{46} or Cognitive Narrative Psychotherapy.\textsuperscript{47} Narrative therapy is used when working with children, couples and families but also with whole communities or in supervision and social work.\textsuperscript{48} While this background scenario highlights complementarities and contextual synergy, the aim of this research is to look specifically at the White and Epston approach to narrative therapy.

e. The research topic in the specific context of practical theology, Christian pastoral ministry and professional settings.

(i) The contemporary context of Christian and pastoral counselling
Gary Collins highlights the current postmodern context and consequent challenges for the world of Christian counselling by illustrating “how the changing world is changing counsellors:” the pace of life is accelerating and people are becoming overwhelmed with work and busyness; the way of living and working is changed by ever-advancing technologies; counselees have an increased and more sophisticated understanding about their problems hence “counsellors become the learners” and are subject to the “ever-escalating flood of information;” the “ever-increasing impact of biotechnology” is improving our understanding of human behaviour; interest in spiritual beliefs and values have exploded, influencing the field of counselling. Collins summarises below the main characteristics of modernism and postmodernism, and traditional and newer approaches to Christian counselling, characteristics which will appear often in data analysis and discussion:\textsuperscript{49}

\textsuperscript{46} Jim Byrne, \textit{What is Cognitive Emotive Narrative Therapy (CENT)?} accessed May 16, 2014, \url{http://www.abc-counselling.com/id75.html}.
Modernism and Postmodernism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Modern Culture</th>
<th>Contemporary Postmodern Culture</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prominent in 19th and 20th centuries</td>
<td>Prominent in the non-Christian world of the late 20th and 21st centuries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Science based</td>
<td>Experience based</td>
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<tr>
<td>Values facts, logic</td>
<td>Value stories, parables</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leaders are experts</td>
<td>Leaders are authentic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leaders ‘have it together’</td>
<td>Leaders are ‘wounded’ and growing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leaders get respect because of their roles and position</td>
<td>Leaders earn respect: more important than role/position</td>
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<tr>
<td>Top-down leadership</td>
<td>Leadership is in team</td>
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<tr>
<td>Audiences listen passively (both in education and worship)</td>
<td>Audiences participate in learning (education and worship)</td>
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<tr>
<td>People aspire to get ahead</td>
<td>People are inspired to move forward</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-believers respect what the Bible says</td>
<td>Non-believers respect what they see in believers’ lives</td>
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<tr>
<td>This type of thinking tends to be declining</td>
<td>This type of thinking permeates culture, including media, and is likely to increase</td>
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Table I1. Modernism and postmodernism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional and Newer Approaches to Christian Counseling</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Traditional Christian Counseling</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Modernist and scientific</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focus on the past</td>
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<tr>
<td>Long-term strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hierarchical – the counsellor is the expert, superior in knowledge and training</td>
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<tr>
<td>Goal is healing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focus on facts and data</td>
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<tr>
<td>Counselor guides</td>
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<tr>
<td>Counselor’s degrees and credentials important</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cultural issues minimized</td>
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<tr>
<td>Minimal emphasis on art</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technology minimized or ignored</td>
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<tr>
<td>Holy Spirit largely ignored</td>
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<tr>
<td>Counselors aloof from the church</td>
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<tr>
<td>Biblical foundation</td>
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Table I2. Traditional and newer approaches to Christian counselling

The oft-repeated relativity of values that postmodernity imposes upon Christian faith and ministry stimulates this research to explore the links between theologically reflective practice and the integration of narrative theology within the practice of narrative therapists. In the final analysis the teaching of a narrative approach to Christian pastoral counselling
practitioners, observed as a part of a wider understanding of pastoral care, will have to include theological reflection skills as a part of training.

(ii) Educational terminology

Three concepts are intentionally used to help define the task of schooling future Christian pastoral counsellors: training, education and formation. Training denotes skills, education aspires to developing competency and formation signifies a personal spiritual process. The inclusion of these elements seeks to enable a faith-based and professionally grounded process of information, formation and transformation suitable for most Christian and pastoral counsellors in various settings of work and service.

(iii) Relationship of the professional setting to Christian and pastoral counselling

In the early 1980’s Charles Gerkin expressed a concern that pastoral counsellors shared about a merging of psychological and Christian views regarding the human person. He starts with a question: “How can pastoral counseling be at the same time both an authentically theological and a scientifically psychological discipline?” This same question is actually embedded in this research, although with a different and specific focus on a narrative approach. Gerkin suggests a hermeneutical mode as a bridge between the “two language worlds,” one of theology and psychology and the other of pastoral counselling. By proposing this Gerkin still supports the incorporation of secular psychotherapy insights into pastoral counselling. However he is also “concerned to offer an alternative to the absorption of a pastoral counselling ministry into psychotherapy to the point of loss of the pastor’s roots in the Christian tradition and language.” Gerkin advocates for an active relationship between disciplines “without collapsing one into the other or violating the basic integrity of either.”

It appears that Christian and pastoral counsellors who work today as mental health professionals are calling for more professionalization than their colleagues working within a
church or pastoral setting. The code of ethics from the main Christian and pastoral counselling association shows the joint call for professionalization. This tends to influence the significant and fundamental way Christian community services offer a view of personhood. In a medical model, ‘to cure’ is the key focus rather than ‘to care’ due to increasingly economically oriented and market-driven forces in health services today. Generally speaking the current orientation of medical service has been, until recently, strongly directed towards disease and diagnostics rather than health and the balanced or good life. Discussion below will explore whether the effect of such an approach has led to over-medication of the population, and, as we note below, the psychiatric approach to mental health may well have led to the psychopathologisation of the population.

Gary Greenberg singles out Thomas Szasz, Ervin Goffman and Michel Foucault who already in the early 60’s had warned how mental illness has more to do with sociological than medical issues. Greenberg has been involved with psychiatrists working on the DSM changes. He points out that many psychiatrists themselves say that DSM diagnoses and criteria are only “fictive placeholders” or “useful constructs.” Psychiatrists are aware, according to Greenberg, that in reality and with presently available tools, the naming and describing of psychological suffering of people “far exceeds their knowledge.” Medical services in psychiatry have been developed towards the medical marketplace with seemingly well-fitting diagnostic criteria but in effect more because of regulating insurance issues, and therewith payment options, which are an especially significant factor for doctors in private practice. Due to prolonged use the DSM phenomenon started to show its deficiencies and, according to Greenberg, “did a lousy job of helping” psychiatrists to agree on the diagnoses that became a focus on “medical diseases rather than the human conditions.”

Allen Frances, American psychiatrist and Chair of the DSM-IV Task Force, argues that “normal needs to be saved from the powerful forces trying to convince us that we are all sick.”

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Frances points out that because of diagnostic inflation “we are becoming a society of pill poppers,” nations overdosed with medications, and that adding new diagnoses will turn our everyday human experiences such as forgetting, eating habits, anxiety or eccentricity into mental disorders.60

Vanessa Chant’s recent doctoral research found that Christian and pastoral counsellors aiming toward professionalization adopted in various ways a medical model of diagnostic psychiatry and seem to have lost on the journey some or all of their ability to integrate spiritual values and concepts from their Christian identities.61

This research will explore how narrative therapy might provide one of the ways through which pastoral care and Christian counselling may avoid any inherent pitfalls and remain faithful to its own Christian tradition, context and values, while still retaining the sensible, ethical and practice-wise elements of professionalization.

60 Frances, Saving Normal, xiv-xvi.
61 Principal findings: “... no significant difference between full-time and part-time counsellors in their attitude to the inclusion of Christian faith and techniques, and ... no significant difference between the methodologies of Christian graduates from secular universities and those of graduates from Christian colleges in relation to the inclusion of spirituality and Christian belief in their counselling.” Vanessa Alexandria Chant, “The Integration of Spirituality in the Practice of Christian Counselling” (D. Min. Studs. thesis, Melbourne College of Divinity, 2010), 194-195.
2.1 General introduction

This research focuses on narrative practice in the context of Christian faith, values and spirituality and seeks to discover what elements of that practice can be used for educational purposes. Before developing a methodological rationale, elements of my own story will reveal the roots of the research questions and bring clarity and understanding to the choice of methodology.

2.1.1 The researcher’s personal narrative and the origin of questions

I consistently describe this research as a quest for personal and spiritual meaning, primarily as part of my professional and faith journey. It must also make sense for the Croatian community where I work and live. These autobiographical elements influenced the choice of methodology and developed questions that emerged from my practice and my theological study. My own narrative therefore is significant.

The first story emerges from my professional work in a counselling setting characterised by one-on-one encounters, meetings with couples and families, and individual or group sessions with youth. The context is a Croatian Residential Care Centre that serves as a social-therapeutic community. Most of the clients who come to ‘therapy’ or ‘treatment’ have a multi-layered, complex history of psychopathology and come into treatment with already prescribed pharmacotherapy. After years of practice I became disturbed by the many categories and constructs that people have allocated to them, diagnoses that seek to define the problem areas of their lives. That was not how I saw them. Many categories were formed within a cultural context and they were created by different helping professions. In our counselling encounters we would spend a good amount of time discussing those categories and constructs and ‘treat’ our clients. Treatments were, naturally, highly professional and based on an eclectic use of generally popular psychotherapy approaches such as CBT, REBT, TA, Gestalt, Systemic Family, Person-Centred and Existential. However, I observed that successful outcomes were not related to any particular approach. There was ‘something else’ that worked – or didn’t work. I started searching for this something else.
One work context was a Youth Residential Care Centre or socio-therapeutic living community that my wife and I manage in Croatia. Clients mostly came to the program with thick dossiers about their disorders, from social conduct to personal psychiatric, and all written by various social services and psychiatric medical settings. My observation? The thicker the dossier the thinner the personal story. Because the dossier is the social or contextual story about the client we are faced with two important questions.

1. Where is the person?
2. Where is her or his voice?

We started looking for that person and that voice. I decided not to read expert reports before meeting the person.¹ I gave myself time to form my ‘knowledge’ about the person before influencing it with the knowledge of others. Interestingly, this research has suggested that I don’t even need to form ‘my knowledge’ about the person if I am prepared to let the co-creative dynamic of a conversation lead to subjective knowledge that has meaning for the story-teller’s life and personal story. These practice experiences shaped the questions: How can a practitioner move away from a psychopathology focus and yet remain professional in counselling work? Is it necessary to use psycho-pathologising language to remain professional?

The second story comes from my experience of teaching Christian counselling. Together with an American colleague, Brett McMichael, I designed a Masters in Christian Counselling at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Osijek, Croatia. The College was set up to serve diverse Christian denominations and ethnicities from many, mostly European countries. There was a great diversity of views about whether we called it Christian, pastoral or biblical counselling. We required a School Policy but it was no easy matter to find a satisfying solution for all parties. Two questions emerged:

1. How can we reconcile Christian counselling, pastoral care and counselling, and Biblical counselling views?
2. Is there a unifying factor?

¹ I sometimes consulted with a committee that decides about the new beneficiaries when it was mandatory to read reports.
The third story emerged from my experience as founding President of the Croatian Association of Christian Counsellors. One Strategic Goal was to develop a training program for future Christian counsellors in our context, where the politics of education were fully explored in order to engage the broader social welfare system and social services. Behind this is a question already addressed in Australia, but which in Croatia is not even a dot on the horizon. Do we want Christian counsellors to be recognised by other secular psychotherapy associations and thus able to be licensed in the same way as other professional counsellors? Additionally, how can we integrate theology and preserve the richness of Christian tradition(s) as mental health resources and yet still comply with the professional requirements of helping disciplines in diverse settings?

2.1.2 Questions, hypotheses and research skills

The following questions explore the appropriateness of a narrative therapy approach in a Christian and pastoral context.

- Does narrative therapy complement Christian beliefs and values in the view of Christian practitioners? From this other questions emerge.
- If narrative therapy does complement Christian beliefs and values, what elements shape this complementarity?
- How is Christian spirituality already integrated with narrative approaches?
- Is narrative therapy used for these integrative purposes and how can it be used in the training, education and formation of Christian and pastoral counsellors?

This research also hypothesizes that narrative therapy ideas:

- are in many aspects compatible with Christian beliefs and values;
- may serve as an enriching concept for Christian and pastoral counselling;
- and may serve as a valuable addition or even a fundamental element for the training, education and formation of Christian and pastoral counsellors.
In brief, research skills included listening and interviewing skills, data collection, theological reflection\(^2\) combined with social scientific data analysis, management and administration. Data analysis engaged thematic analysis, content analysis, data reduction to categories and properties,\(^3\) statistical analysis and theological reflection.

### 2.1.3 The aims and purposes of the research

The aims and purposes were to:

- explore how a narrative therapy approach can be integratively applied to Christian and pastoral counselling;
- explore the compatibility of narrative practices to Christian values and beliefs;
- identify the core elements of narrative therapy theory or general narrative practices that can be used in the training, education and formation of Christian pastoral counsellors.

### 2.2 Research phases

The research was developed in three phases.

- **Phase 1:** Survey questionnaire with members of the Christian Counsellors Association of Australia (CCAA).
- **Phase 2:** Based on data from Phase 1, subjects were allocated for interviews. Research questions were refined to focus on the integration of Christian values and spirituality in the context of narrative practice and on the characteristics of that practice in a Christian context.
- **Phase 3:** Based on the data from Phase 2, a focus group was formed. Final questions for the focus group emerged from the interview data. They focused on how narrative practices might be conceptualised in a Christian educational context for training Christian and pastoral carers and counsellors.

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2.3 Research limitations

Limitations were identified in the cultural, social and religious differences between this researcher’s European (German and Swiss work/study context) and Croatian (birth, work and family residence) background and the intended site of research and its academic environment. Although the environment and culture are not necessarily the same in Australia and Croatia, nevertheless the main characteristics of a societal Western civilisation context are common and thus are open for the appropriate application of research results. Additionally, the Dulwich Centre, Adelaide and Michael White provided a home for Narrative therapy and consequently the immediacy of conversation resources and the availability of therapists has richly informed the research.

2.4 Epistemological background

The following presentation of epistemology, theoretical perspectives, research methodology and methods is informed by the four elements (discussed later) of Michael Crotty’s “scaffolded learning”\(^4\) and also seeks to provide an underpinning discussion that informs a backdrop for the postmodern dimensions of Narrative therapy.

This research is based on subjective ontology. “Subjective” is understood here as “relating to the way a person experiences things in his or her own mind” and ontology as “a particular theory about the nature of being or the kinds of things that have existence.”\(^5\) For this researcher the project was a “conscious experiencing of the self as both inquirer and

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respondent, as teacher and learner, as the one coming to know the self within the processes of research itself.”\(^6\)

### 2.4.1 Social constructionism

The epistemological background of this research is located in social constructionism. Within this stance researchers “retain the idea of self as a social creation” able to develop meanings but these “meanings are necessarily conveyed through structures (logical, syntactical) that are social in nature.”\(^7\) A semantic definition suggests

> a concept or perception of something based on the collective views developed and maintained within a society or social group; a social phenomenon or convention originating within and cultivated by society or a particular social group, as opposed to existing inherently or naturally.\(^8\)

Kenneth Gergen offers another simple description of the “drama called social construction” adding that “what we take to be the world importantly depends on how we approach it, and how we approach it depends on the social relationships of which we are part.”\(^9\) The basic idea of social construction therefore appears “simple and straightforward” yet still “asks us to rethink virtually everything we have been taught about the world and ourselves … with this rethinking we are invited into new and challenging forms of ourselves.”\(^10\) I find this a fitting, pivotal basis for understanding the approaches of narrative therapy. Gergen also asks us to consider the consequences of this worldview, suggesting that “if everything we consider real is socially constructed, then nothing is real unless people agree that it is.”\(^11\)

We can imagine the influence of this on therapy practice. In relation to therapy as social construction Gergen raises questions about the medical model (discussed below in the

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literature review) that informs most traditional forms of therapy and counselling and asks if there are “useful alternatives” to therapeutic constructions of the client as “having an illness.”

Gergen recalls Michel Foucault's belief that “madness exists only within a society”12 and notes that the mental health industry has over 400 terms for mental illness. Additionally, many large-scale research projects focus on locating the causes of these ‘diseases’ of the mind, and enormous hours are devoted to testing the efficacy of various therapies in treating the mentally ill. Increasingly the mental health profession will turn to pharmaceuticals as a means for cure. For the social constructionist these mammoth ‘scientizing’ efforts are not only misguided, but the results are often damaging. … ‘illness’ is only one of many possible constructions…. If he was not defined as ill, practices other than ‘curing’ might be set in motion.13

Gergen extracts four characteristics of constructionist-based therapies that I will trace through the analysis and discussion: focusing on meaning; viewing therapy as co-construction; focusing on relationship; and value sensitivity, because “there is no value neutrality in the therapeutic relationship.”14 To develop this more carefully we must engage Crotty’s belief that in the

constructionist view … meaning is not discovered but constructed. Meaning does not inhere in the object, merely waiting for someone to come upon it. … actual meaning emerges only when consciousness engages with them. … meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting.15

Accordingly, meanings found in this research are constructed or co-constructed and not created.

Tom Andrews highlights how social constructionism served in the remodelling of grounded theory. He argues for its compatibility with grounded theory and yet critiques the relativism of constructivist grounded theory which is a choice for this research and will be described in further text.

Society is viewed as existing both as a subjective and objective reality. Meaning is shared, thereby constituting a taken-for-granted reality. Grounded theorists understand knowledge as beliefs in which people can have reasonable confidence; a common sense understanding and consensual notion as to what

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12 Gergen, An Invitation, 47.
constitutes knowledge. If it is accepted that social constructionism is not based on a relativist perspective, then it is compatible with Grounded Theory methodology.\(^\text{16}\)

Andrews notes that both realism and relativism as polarised perspectives are problematic for qualitative research yet “this is to confuse epistemology with claims about ontology and is a fundamental misunderstanding of the philosophy that underpins social constructionism.”\(^\text{17}\)

Social constructionism, argues Andrews, accepts the existence of objective reality, because it has “an epistemological not an ontological perspective” and its criticism and misunderstandings arise from misinterpretation of that fact. Andrews agrees with Kirk and Miller that the search for final and absolute truth should be left to philosophers and theologians. He suggests that social constructionism places a high value on “everyday interactions between people and how they use language to construct their reality. It regards the social practices people engage in as the focus of enquiry.”\(^\text{18}\) Apart from the focus on language this description of social constructionism not only reflects Grounded Theory, I believe it resonates with ideas of narrative practices as understood in this research. However, Andrews distinguishes between grounded theories, suggesting that social constructionism that considers society as existing both as objective and subjective reality is fully compatible with classical grounded theory, unlike constructionist grounded theory which takes a relativist position. Relativism is not compatible with classical grounded theory. ... Therefore choosing constructionist grounded theory based on the ontological assumptions of the researcher seems incompatible with the idea of social constructionism.\(^\text{19}\)

This research is not focused on ontological ‘truth’ about its topic but rather about the phenomena. Nevertheless some claims with an ontological flavour will still be made. Discussion on epistemology’s interest in how we know what we know and how ontology is interested in how things are or what it means to know\(^\text{20}\) would exceed the scope of this research. However, this researcher philosophically disagrees with Andrews, and thinks that

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\(^{17}\) Andrews, *What is*, 1.


\(^{19}\) Andrews, *What is*, 1.

relativistic claims within their own dimensions may serve as just another ontological ‘truth’ and that both philosophy and theology as historically developed products of social groups, can also be researched ontologically from a relativistic constructivist point of view and also with constructivist grounded theory.

Crotty suggests that ontological and epistemological issues “tend to emerge together” and that “to talk about the construction of meaning is to talk about the construction of meaningful reality,” thus embracing both.21 He concludes that “[r]ealism in ontology and constructionism in epistemology turn out to be quite compatible,”22 a view that this researcher confirms.

2.5 Theoretical perspectives

2.5.1 Postmodernism
Postmodernism offers both a broad and narrow framework for this research. In a broader sense it reflects an aspiration to question previous approaches and deconstruct previous authority sources and power, where “by using narrative the researcher is tacitly questioning the legitimate authority of macrolevel history.”23 In a narrower sense it focuses on postmodern aspects of narrative and it comfortably allows settling narratives both as a means and a content of the research. Further theoretical perspectives include aspects of interpretivism, symbolic interactionism, action research and phenomenology.

2.5.2 Interpretivism
Contrary to positivistic belief in objective reality, interpretivism embraces the relativity and multiplicity of personal narratives and experiences, allowing greater flexibility and personal research of diverse meanings and concepts. For Crotty, an interpretivist approach “looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world.”24

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21 Crotty, The Foundations, 10.
22 Crotty, The Foundations, 11.
‘multi-storyness’ (key Narrative therapy concept) of interpretivism is highly appropriate for researching narrative practices, faithfully reflecting the core ideas of a narrative approach.

2.5.3 Symbolic interactionism
Symbolic interaction theory and allied concepts help describe the framework of this research. Based on George Herbert Mead’s teachings, his student Herbert Blumer presented three major premises: humans will “act toward things on the basis of the meanings that these things have for them;” consequently the “meaning attributed to those things arises out of social interaction with others;” such “meanings are modified through an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters.”25 This understanding of meaning and interpretative processes is, I believe, closest to and mirrored in the outcomes of interview and focus group conversations in this research.

2.5.4 Phenomenology
Phenomenological method is used to interpret the experiences of practitioners of narrative therapy in different Christian and pastoral settings and as shared in the interview and focus group experiences. My own observed or experienced practices of narrative therapy embody this method. It has been consolidated through courses taken, primarily in pastoral care and counselling, but also through application of narrative therapy in pastoral settings at various University of Divinity colleges, and within the Level One and Two training through the Dulwich Centre, Adelaide. Phenomenology in this context is understood as “concerned with understanding how the everyday, inter-subjective world (the life world or Lebenswelt) is constituted”26 and seeks to enhance what a dictionary meaning would call “the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view.”27

Phenomenology enables us to think deconstructively and affirm Crotty’s assertion that phenomenology “is about saying ‘No!’ to the meaning system bequeathed to us.”28 His

26 Thomas Schwandt, "Epistemological Stances for Qualitative Inquiry", in Denzin and Lincoln, Landscape, 297.
28 Crotty, The Foundations, 82.
summary resonates with the focus of this research. “Phenomenology suggests that, if we lay
aside, as best we can, the prevailing understanding of those phenomena and revisit our
immediate experience of them, possibilities and enhancement of former meaning” emerge
for us.29 This description relates well both to the “not knowing” stance of a narrative therapist
and to the position of a constructivist grounded theorist.

2.5.5 Participatory and theological action research

Elements of critical action research are present in this research. Kemmis and McTaggart note
that critical action research “expresses a commitment to bring together broad social analysis
– the self-reflective, collective self-study of practice, the way in which language is used,
organization and power in a local situation, and action to improve things.”30 The concepts of
action research relate well to the field of practical theology and some authors espouse the
term “theological action research.” Elaine Graham describes how action research provides a
tool for practical theology through its emphasis on values.

Action research is founded on the indivisibility of value and action: a conviction
that knowledge and research cannot be dispassionate and that values are
themselves iterated in the process of their implementation in practice. It insists
on the inductive and contextual nature of knowledge and assumes that
knowledge comes from human experiences (albeit interpreted and codified
through rational enquiry and analysis), rather than proceeding deductively
from revealed truth.31

Firstly, in response, I see such a process and method reflected throughout this research.
Intertwined values and actions are addressed from the beginning in order to help reveal the
experiential and contextual quality of local knowledges as expressed by each interviewee.
Graham notes that action research “starts not from theory ... but with a problem” and
inductively proceeds “from experience to reflection and thence to action” thus embodying

29 Crotty, The Foundations, 78.
30 Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart, “Participatory Action Research: Communicative Action and the Public
Theology, no. 17(1), (August, 2013): 148-178. For deeper discussion: Helen Cameron, Deborah Bhatti, Catherine
Duce, James Sweeney and Claire Watkins, Talking About God in Practice: Action Research and Practical
Theology, (London: SCM, 2010). Helen Cameron and Catherine Duce, Researching Practice in Ministry and
action research’s principle of “learning through doing.”\textsuperscript{32} Although grounded theory is the main framework for this research, participatory action research embraces its essential elements. The researcher’s separation from his country of origin and his professional work place means that although the results will be applied on return, significant elements of action research undergird this research, as described earlier in the personal story. Graham develops this embrace of practice and practitioner, claiming that the “process of action research is described in very concrete terms as a simple problem-solving investigation conducted by someone who asks themselves, ‘how do I improve my practice?’”\textsuperscript{33} There lies the affinity of action research with grounded theory within this project.

Secondly, action research is “essentially a collaborative undertaking” with an “insider approach” that aims to foster and build dialogue between participants in “any given context.”\textsuperscript{34} This complements narrative topics and practice in that ‘insider approach’ is a key Narrative therapy concept. Foreshadowing outcomes, interviewees suggested that the application of narrative therapy or practices is not so much found in its methods or techniques, it is actually a way of life, a philosophy. For me, and through the process of this research, this way of life became inevitably permeated with research methodology, personal contact with interviewees and colleagues and even embraced my own spiritual journey.

Thirdly, action research for Graham “celebrates a diversity of ways of knowing,” drawing from fields like economics, politics, psychology and spirituality and aims to contribute from aspects of practical knowledge towards the improvement of personal and communal well-being.\textsuperscript{35} This “diversity of ways of knowing” provides another term for “multistoried” experience in people’s lives in a narrative therapy view. Those people become co-creating partners.

Action research is fundamentally rooted in a social constructivist epistemology that sees people as builders and interpreters of meaning. Human actors are co-creators of meaning, and we act in the world on the basis of our meaning-making, which is what undergirds collective and individual action.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{32} Graham, \textit{Is Practical Theology}, 151.
\textsuperscript{33} Graham, \textit{Is Practical Theology}, 151.
\textsuperscript{34} Graham, \textit{Is Practical Theology}, 151.
\textsuperscript{35} Graham, \textit{Is Practical Theology}, 153.
\textsuperscript{36} Graham, \textit{Is Practical Theology}, 156.
Finally, what is the link between action research and practical theology? Graham writes that “one of the tasks of practical theological research is to investigate and interpret the lived experience of people of faith.” This investigation however, “might generate very novel forms of spirituality, or conclude that traditional ways of imagining God are in need of fundamental revision.” This was to be confirmed more than once in the data analysis yet its theological aspects will not feature too strongly in the discussion because of other pressing factors. However, Graham notes that “action research presents itself as highly value-driven” and when applied in a practical theological context also presents as “spiritual practice which seeks to contemplate and connect to, the very well-springs of existence.” Theological action research objectives, according to Graham, are therefore to understand a situation by “studying faith in practice using qualitative methods,” to develop praxis-driven change, and to form a character and agency nurtured by its core values, or with Graham’s words “to put such data to work in the cultivation of theologically-grounded practical wisdom.”

### 2.5.6 Constructivist grounded theory

The research is based upon constructivist grounded theory, using methods of coding and categorising of the core elements of narrative practices. Through interpretation and integration of theological and practical aspects it aims to develop a fresh model of education. Since its introduction to the field of qualitative research by Glaser and Strauss in 1967, grounded theory has gathered a few critics. Critique did not diminish its use but rather refined its basic principles. These new developments provided a framework for this research that aligns with Kathy Charmaz and Antony Bryant’s definition.

Grounded theory is a method of qualitative inquiry in which researchers develop inductive theoretical analyses from their collected data and subsequently gather further data to check these analyses. The purpose of grounded theory is theory construction, rather than description or application of existing theories.

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Charmaz and Bryant emphasise that grounded theory method (GTM) “is far and away the most widely claimed qualitative method in recent and current sociological and social research literature.”\textsuperscript{43} Criticism is often related to methodological claims and knowledge production. In defence, authors review Glaser and Strauss’ initial formulations of GTM and then point to innovative features from the 1990’s until today as “sufficiently robust responses” to this critique. One response that both authors initiate and represent, develops a constructivist form of GTM that they describe as “much more a case of reinterpretation or restating of the principles of the method than a new formulation.”\textsuperscript{44} Elsewhere Charmaz indicates that researchers locate themselves in researched realities and that a “constructivist approach emphasizes the studied phenomenon rather than the methods of studying it.”\textsuperscript{45}

Charmaz and Bryant evaluate the credibility of constructivist GTM by addressing three issues: credible data; analytic credibility; and theoretical credibility. Some critics focused on a perceived epistemological weakness so it is important to establish credible data first because the “credibility of grounded theory starts from ground up. The quality and sufficiency of the data for accomplishing the research goals matter.”\textsuperscript{46} A constructivist revision of grounded theory prioritises “gathering detailed data and treats both data and data collection as located in temporal, spatial, social and situational conditions.”\textsuperscript{47} Constructivists therefore remain alert to both researcher and participant starting points and their own standpoints, and look for shifts and development. For constructivists “data do not simply reside in an external world but instead reflect the particular conditions of its production” and this in turn encourages “locating the data and analysis in these conditions.”\textsuperscript{48} Charmaz and Bryant describe non-verbal interaction that influences co-construction of the interview process and challenges the relative power positions of the researcher and the participant around control of the interview.

\textsuperscript{43} Charmaz and Bryant, \textit{Grounded Theory}, 294. Italics by authors.
\textsuperscript{44} Charmaz and Bryant, \textit{Grounded Theory}, 297.
\textsuperscript{46} Charmaz and Bryant, \textit{Grounded Theory}, 298.
\textsuperscript{47} Charmaz and Bryant, \textit{Grounded Theory}, 298.
\textsuperscript{48} Charmaz and Bryant, \textit{Grounded Theory}, 298-299.
At some points this becomes a “silent dialogue” where conversations become “more than words alone” and where both sides “may tacitly construct and negotiate meanings that influence what can and will be said.”49 In this research for example, there was a predictable emergence of topics focusing on the integration of Christian theology, values and spirituality. Many interviewees were cautious about languaging their experience, for good reason. They met me for the first time on the interview day, and they were unaware of my positions on Christian theology, values and spirituality. They were well aware this is a ‘theological’ study conducted by a perceived ‘expert’ theologian, and that it was all recorded. Consequently more refined, sensitive probing is necessary and “constructivist grounded theory emphasizes going into emergent phenomena and defining their properties.”50 To break down phenomena a researcher commences with “What” and “How” questions that bring an “analytic edge to the data collection” and “shape a subsequent theoretical analysis” that “leads toward explicating processes.”51 “When” questions encourage specific data about “conditions under which the studied phenomenon or process occurs or changes” and help researchers to uncover “specific meanings and actions” through given sequences of the story.52

Referring to analytic credibility Charmaz and Bryant note that “grounded theory coding differs from other types of coding because it codes for actions, invokes comparative methods, and discerns meanings through studying actions and events.”53 They emphasize the importance of the initial coding sequence, advocating for pivotal use of gerunds in the line-by-line coding process. Constructivists describe coding as emergent and interactive where “collecting and identifying themes is the primary way qualitative researchers process and analyse data”54 and call for “the robustness and usefulness of codes through comparative analysis” where credibility is established “by the strength of both the analytic concepts and claims, and the evidence to support them.”55

49 Charmaz and Bryant, Grounded Theory, 299.
50 Charmaz and Bryant, Grounded Theory, 301.
51 Charmaz and Bryant, Grounded Theory, 301-302.
52 Charmaz and Bryant, Grounded Theory, 302. See also Bruce L. Berg, Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences. 3rd. ed., (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1998), especially Chapter Three: “A Dramaturgical Look at Interviewing.”
53 Charmaz and Bryant, Grounded Theory, 303.
55 Charmaz and Bryant, Grounded Theory, 304.
Analytic credibility leads to theoretical credibility and this is where grounded theory’s greatest strength resides. Theoretical sampling “allows you to choose the population to study based on the theoretical constructs of your project”⁵⁶ and then to “fill out the properties of tentative categories, not to increase representativeness of their initial sample.”⁵⁷ By going back and forth to the same people or research setting the researcher may also use theoretical sampling “to increase the depth and precision of their categories and their knowledge of the studied people and their situations.”⁵⁸ The researcher’s use of an iterative process reveals grounded theory’s analytic strength.

Mills, Bonner and Francis⁵⁹ describe constructivist grounded theory as “ontologically relativist and epistemologically subjectivist.” This highlights the functional role of the researcher as an author whose reality window is not provided exclusively by word-based data because “the ‘discovered’ reality arises from the interactive process and its temporal, cultural, and structural context.” This researcher is therefore a co-producer with participants, producing data and meanings “as the author of a co-construction of experience and meaning ... an important next step in grounded theory research.”

2.6 Research methods

The chosen mixed-methods approach used both qualitative and quantitative methods, thus dividing “inquiry into dichotomous categories: explanation versus confirmation” where qualitative work addresses the first category and quantitative research the second.⁶⁰ While quantitative methods “tend to assume the primacy of nomothetic knowledge [and] qualitative methods focus on ideographic knowledge” it is important to acknowledge that “in practice they need each other for the development of thorough understanding.”⁶¹ In the context of this research quantitative research had a somewhat different role as will be explained later.

The particular methods used were:

- A survey questionnaire for Christian counsellors, members of CCAA;

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⁵⁶ Sensing, *Qualitative Research*, 83.
⁵⁷ Charmaz and Bryant, *Grounded Theory*, 304.
⁵⁸ Charmaz and Bryant, *Grounded Theory*, 305.
⁶¹ John Swinton and Harriet Mowat, *Practical Theology and Qualitative Research*, (London: SCM, 2006), 44.
• Semi-structured interviews with Christian and pastoral counsellors focusing on personal views and experiences with narrative therapy;
• A focus group interview deepening the questions from the semi-structured interviews. Participants came from the semi-structured interviews.

2.6.1 Quantitative method

a) Survey

The survey questionnaire is defined by Fink as “a system for collecting information to describe, compare, or explain knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour.” Stangor defines survey as “a series of self-report measures administered either through an interview or a written questionnaire,” offering “snapshots” of opinions, attitudes or behaviours of a particular researched group. Earl Babbie suggests that surveys “may be used for descriptive, explanatory, and exploratory purposes.” Exploratory purpose was primarily employed to determine the extent of the use of different therapy approaches among CCAA respondents, with a special focus on postmodern therapies and accompanying views on the training, education and formation of Christian counsellors.

b) Questionnaire

Stangor defines a questionnaire as “a set of fixed-format, self-report items that is completed by respondents at their own pace, often without supervision.” Respondents returned the questionnaire by email and participation was voluntary. Choices given were: nominal or categorical – with no numerical or preferential values; ordinal – respondents rate or order choices; numerical – respond in number e.g. age; scale – for open-ended questions. Open-ended questions could be answered with: dichotomous or two-point question as “yes” and “no” answers; multiple-choice answers; questions in a Likert scale; open-ended questions with free answers. The research used “questions that an individual completes by oneself.” For quantitative analysis, the computer software IBM SPSS Statistics 20 was used. The data

64 Stangor, Research, 109.
66 Stangor, Research, 110.
68 Fink, The Survey, 42.
analysis chapter will explain its use in more detail but for now, this program enables researchers to “save, retrieve and analyse much of the evaluation and measurement data” that is collected and can “generate data related to reliability and validity.”

### 2.6.2 Qualitative methods

Qualitative methods provide the major instruments for this research. Interviews and focus group complemented the researcher’s personal and primary interest in authentic local knowledge of Christian and pastoral narrative practitioners. Research into narrative therapy in a Christian context was not part of my previous professional experience and therefore it was anticipated that qualitative methods could provide much broader knowledge of “the lived reality of human experience” and thus take “most seriously the authenticity and reality of ideographic truth.”

#### a) Interview

Miller and Glassner argue that “in-depth interview accounts provide a meaningful opportunity to study and theorize about the social world,” rejecting the objectivist-constructivist division that interview narratives are exclusively true only in the specific context in which they are “invented” through interaction between interviewer and interviewee. I agree that analysis of interview data supports the possibility of learning about the social world and social phenomena, or in this research, Christian and pastoral care and counselling phenomena.

Carolyn Baker, according to Silverman, suggests that “interviewer and interviewee actively construct some version of the world appropriate to what we take to be self-evident about the person to whom we are speaking and the context of the question.” Silverman proposes two versions of interview data. Positivism gives ‘facts’ about some behaviour, attitudes or the world and interactionism engages authentic experiences of “subjects who actively construct

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70 Swinton and Mowat, *Practical Theology*, 44.


their social world.” This research relies more on Interactionism and looks for authentic insights about each narrative practitioner’s experiences.

Denzin notes three arguments for open-ended interviews: interviewees can respond in a unique way according to how they define their world; no pre-defined sequence of questions will suit all interviewees; interviewees are given space to raise issues not previously determined by the schedule. Miller and Glassner state that interactionist research “starts from a belief that people create and maintain meaningful worlds,” shaping meaning through language so that “interview subjects construct not just narratives, but social worlds.” This approach values specific methods and integration but also appreciates the context and milieu of interviews take place and to which the results of this research are primarily addressed. Miller and Glassner address the issue of power and mutual benefit, noting that in-depth interviewing is particularly empowering “from the points of view of research participants,” another narrative principle.

A semi-structured interview, bridging into an open-ended format, sought to capture broader themes through direct contact with participants and their emerging data. However, Hammersley and Atkinson warn that there is no ‘pure’ data and that the non-directive character of this kind of interview is still “in itself a form of social control which shapes what people say” because it mediates the reasoning of both interviewer and interviewee. Possible limitations of interactionism were considered: the different interactional roles of interviewer and interviewee; ‘self-presentation’ in the interview especially in the early stages; the possibility of fabrication; the difficulty of reaching into private experiences; and the influence of the interview context. Such interviews scope

a new area of research, to find out what the basic issues are, how people conceptualize the topic, what terminology people use, and what their level of understanding is. The flexibility of the unstructured interview, if properly used, helps us to bring out the affective and value-laden aspects of respondents’

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73 Silverman, Interpreting, 91.
74 Silverman, Interpreting, 95.
77 Miller and Glassner, The ‘Inside’, 137.
79 Silverman, Interpreting, 95.
80 Denzin’s list. See Silverman, Interpreting, 97.
responses to determine the personal significance of their attitudes. ... and social context of beliefs and feelings.\textsuperscript{81}

While these elements guide developing questions regarding the integration of postmodern narrative ideas and Christian faith, values and spirituality, how ‘real’ is this kind of research and how truly does it represent the phenomenon researched? Does the interview data speak reliably enough of people’s experiences as meaning and validly represent collective phenomena expressed as “narrated structures”?\textsuperscript{82} Silverman’s third rule of qualitative research notes that “a phenomenon always escapes. ... The phenomenon that always escapes is the ‘essential’ reality pursued in such work. The phenomenon that can be made to \textit{reappear} is the practical activity of participants in establishing a phenomenon-in-context.\textsuperscript{83}

Data from this research are not “naturally-occurring” data\textsuperscript{84} but are generated through pre-thought and semi-structured conversations within a specific setting following Silverman’s sixth rule, that is, we need to understand “the cultural forms through which ‘truths’ are accomplished.”\textsuperscript{85} Silverman cites two sources. Firstly, Wittgenstein suggests that “in analyzing another’s activities, we are always describing what is appropriate to a communal ‘language-game’” and therefore “there is no direct route to what we might choose to call ‘inner experience’.” Secondly, Mills describes the “vocabularies of motive” or “motive talk” that lie behind people’s expressions, reminding us that “for sociological purposes, nothing lies behind people’s accounts.”\textsuperscript{86}

Interviewees were drawn representatively from a body of Christian and pastoral counsellors. Sampling primarily used the non-probability method in that participants were selected deliberately. Because this method relies on available subjects it is also called “availability

\textsuperscript{82} Silverman, \textit{Interpreting}, 144-170. Silverman compares “structure” and “meaning” in the context of validity and reliability.
\textsuperscript{83} Silverman, \textit{Interpreting}, 203.
\textsuperscript{84} Silverman, \textit{Interpreting}, 208.
\textsuperscript{85} Silverman, \textit{Interpreting}, 208.
\textsuperscript{86} Silverman, \textit{Interpreting}, 209.
sampling, accidental sampling or convenience sampling.”\(^{87}\) Purposeful sampling\(^{88}\) was recognised in the arbitrary choice of interest group representatives where “participants are selected as indicated by the initial analysis of interviews.”\(^{89}\) Snowball sampling “using people whom the original [interviewee] introduces” to the researcher was used to identify some interviewees after initial contact with a peer or via recommendation.\(^{90}\)

Categorizing and coding was largely informed by John Saldana’s insistence on “meticulous attention to language and deep reflection on the emergent patterns and meanings of human experience.”\(^{91}\) The practice of “initial and thorough readings of ... data while writing analytic memos or jotting in the margins tentative ideas for codes, topics, and noticeable patterns or themes” was constant.\(^{92}\) More detailed, illustrated explication of this complex process features in the Data Analysis chapter.

b) Focus group

Morgan describes three basic uses of focus groups:

- “self-contained” method where the focus group is the principal source of data;
- “supplementary” source that complements some primary method;
- “multi-method” use where the focus group is combined with other primary methods that determine its use.\(^{93}\)

A multi-method approach aligns with this research where “focus groups typically add to the data gathered through other qualitative methods, such as participant observation and individual interviews.”\(^{94}\) Focus groups complement interviews because of their “ability to observe interaction on the topic,” providing direct evidence about participants’ similarities


\(^{90}\) Berg, *Qualitative Research*, 95.


\(^{92}\) Saldana, *The Coding*, 18.


\(^{94}\) Morgan, *Focus Groups*, 3.
and differences in contrast to later analyses of interviewees separate statements. Individual interviews enable an interviewer to have more control and thus elicit a greater amount of personal information while focus groups require greater attention by the moderator and provide less detail and depth from each participant. However, the shared control factor can empower participants to give directions which might be “especially useful in exploratory research” as seen in this research.

Group questions about how to organize training and education in narrative practices offered more freedom for diverse answers, allowed participants to have more influence on the outcome and group interaction generated a mutual interpersonal motivation for the topic. A focus group can draw on “knowledge, ideas, story-telling, self-presentation, and linguistic exchanges within a given cultural context” thus creating a natural partner for narrative approaches. The value of focus groups is emphasized by Fern’s belief that “two eight-person focus groups would produce as many ideas as 10 individual interviews” and considering the amount of time necessary to conduct and analyse 10 interviews, focus groups are clearly more efficient. Morgan also notes that focus groups “expand our options when it comes to matching our research questions to qualitative methods,” a helpful factor when the focus shifted to explore methods of education.

A predictable critique focuses on the researcher’s interest and influence in the moderator’s role and questioning process. This problem is hardly unique to focus groups and emerges with other methods such as observation and individual interviews. This factor was addressed by using mixed methods, (“the combination of strengths of one approach makes up for the weaknesses of the other approach”) and triangulation of data source, method of collection and method of analysis. When interpreting focus group data Morgan highlights the importance of “distinguishing between what participants find interesting and what they find

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95 Morgan, Focus Groups, 10.
96 Morgan, Focus Groups, 10.
97 Morgan, Focus Groups, 11.
99 Morgan, Focus Groups, 14.
100 Morgan, Focus Groups, 17.
101 Morgan, Focus Groups, 14.
important” and that the topic that was mentioned the most times and with most enthusiasm and energy should receive the most emphasis in the report.\(^{103}\) For interview and focus group work, content analysis was used to produce “a relatively systematic and comprehensive summary or overview of the data set as a whole.”\(^{104}\)

### 2.6.3 Theological reflection

This research addresses the field of pastoral and practical theology, more specifically, the context of Christian and pastoral care and counselling and its use of narrative therapy or narrative practices. Narrative therapy, narrative approach and narrative practices are terms used interchangeably in this thesis. Narrative therapy is defined primarily by Michael White and David Epston, and secondarily Dulwich Centre work. Narrative approach broadly addresses ideas from various narrative practices and practitioners. Narrative practices are mainly addressed as applied practical methods. Examples of these fields are presented in the literature review that follows and theological reflection is also defined. However a brief note is required here since theological reflection becomes a natural component of data analysis and discussion.

Narrative ideas naturally drew me to narrative theology. The literature review presents some themes from Robert Piehl’s unpublished PhD thesis exploring the value of narrative theology versus narrative therapy. However, through my research and understanding of narrative therapy I find a natural dialogue emerges with theology that highlights common points between the two disciplines. In the Discussion chapter, narrative therapy engages a theology of language, relational theology, contextual theology, and perhaps most important of all, public theology and apophatic theology.

The second main interview question explores the integration of Christian values, spirituality and theology. Consequently, I will offer personal examples of the conversation between narrative therapy ideas and lived Christian faith as they invite various theologies into dialogue. There is also the question of theological integration with different counselling and psychotherapy traditions.

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\(^{103}\) Morgan, *Focus Groups*, 62-63.

Two thousand years of Christianity have lent a multi-storied dimension to this theological and pastoral heritage and these themes will nuance the next chapter which is dedicated to exploring the literature and prominent themes within the world of Narrative therapy.
Chapter 3
LITERATURE REVIEW

‘Narrative Approach: A Survey of the Integrative Proposals of Christian Pastoral Theologians’

This literature review identifies existing narrative themes and practice principles from amongst historical and current authors. The structure of the literature review aims to present a broader span of ideas and experiences within areas where narratives and Christian and pastoral practices or theologies meet. Intersections with original White and Epston ideas are indicated and fresh perspectives according to cultural or practice-related environmental circumstances are introduced.

The literature review opens with Charles V. Gerkin and Andrew Lester who together represent a historical view. Gerkin perhaps has greater influence than Lester if the year of published works is considered, but I believe their combined contribution has a fundamental influence on the scholars who follow. The second cohort, as I see it, represents contemporary expressions of narratives within a pastoral context and includes Christie Cozad Neuger, Neil Pembroke, Carrie Doehring and Ruard Ganzevoort. The next group of authors, Burrell David Dinkins, Jason D. Hays and Ray Galvin, provide examples of the practical application of narrative practices in pastoral settings. Another significant and influential resource that addresses the diverse relationships between narrative therapy and Christian faith is “Interweavings.” Chapters and articles on numerous integrational topics and some research reports are well represented by Richard Cook, Irene Alexander, Su Fenwick, Michelle Youngs, John Silver, Jo-anne Brown, Lex McMillan, Nicola Hoggard Creegan, John Meteyard, James Arkwright and Donald McMenamin.

The literature review also engages Robert Piehl’s doctoral thesis on the topic, an approach I have identified as a conservative theological interpretation of the relationship between narrative theology and narrative therapy. A complementary discussion of two cultural perspectives from Edward Wimberly and Tapiwa N. Mucherera then explores how narratives are used in pastoral work within the African context. Finally, there is an example of Scriptural narratives use in personal ministry as described by John Henderson.

3.1 Historical perspectives: Authors who pioneered the field of integration between narratives and pastoral or practical theology

Charles V. Gerkin offers a pioneering understanding of integration where narratives and pastoral work develop a historical foundation for the discussions that follow.
3.1.1 Charles V. Gerkin: A narrative hermeneutical perspective

Charles Gerkin was for many years a professor of pastoral theology and psychology and a practitioner of pastoral counselling. Gerkin develops a narrative hermeneutical perspective of the life of the soul where a theology of hope holds a special place. This identity is mysteriously connected with the individual and is conferred both by context and by God, which in fusion forms a basis for the professional and personal self. When correlating Christian identity with its groundedness in Christian story, Gerkin understands human beings and their “theological identity” as “living the life of the soul.”¹ In response to God’s activity in their lives, all humans, both in a religious and non-religious context, exercise hope, faith and care “for they are part of the narrative of the soul.”² Gerkin’s narrative hermeneutical theory of pastoral theology is rooted in the Christian heritage, characterised by the use of a multi-disciplinary approach, based in ministry and practical theology and uses the hermeneutical and narrative views of Paul Ricoeur and Hans-Georg Gadamer.

In The Living Human Document³ Gerkin states that pastoral counselors “are, more than anything else, listeners to and interpreters of stories.”⁴ People seeking counselling search for “a listener who is an expert at interpretation” and also one who can make sense of what threatens to become senseless, and by his or her interpretation reduce pain and “make the powerful feelings more manageable.”⁵ However, such a listener has to be aware of the cultural differences of the storytellers and their “use of language, symbols and images,” and also “to avoid, at all costs, the temptation to stereotype or take for granted.”⁶ Yet, the pastoral counsellor is not only a listener but also a “bearer of stories.”⁷ When understanding or interpreting stories of others the pastoral counsellor is not coming “empty-handed” but with his or her own interpretations of life, symbols and images, and with themes from his or her cultural milieu shaped by private experience. Therefore pastoral counselling “may thus be

understood as a dialogical hermeneutical process involving the counselor and cunselee in communication across the boundaries of language world.”

Gerkin builds on Anton Boisen, the founder of the clinical pastoral education movement, pointing out Boisen’s concern that “objectifications of theological language” will “not lose touch in the minds of pastors with the concrete data of human experience.” To restore this connection seminarians and pastors, in Boisen’s view, have to carefully and systematically study peoples’ lives as “living human documents.” The human person is therefore to be read and interpreted in a similar manner to the interpretation of a historical text and Gerkin finds this to be “central to Boisen’s intention.” Accordingly, each individual living human document is respected within his or her own integrity with the aim of understanding and interpreting rather than categorising or stereotyping them.

Gerkin is at least partnering if not preceding Michael White and David Epston in considering such views on language and meaning. Aligning with Boisen’s approach Gerkin writes:

Language constructs world. To have a world, to live in a world, means, for humans, to inhabit a time and place in which a certain language is connected with experience to give meaning to that experience. More than anything else, the capacity to make meaning marks the human as human ... To speak of the person as a living human document is to acknowledge this connection between life and language. It is to acknowledge that to understand what Boisen calls the inner world is dependent upon understanding the language by which that inner world of experience is connected to external events.

Perhaps the most significant difference between Boisen/Gerkin’s and White/Epston’s views might be that Boisen/Gerkin insist on an external interpreter (most likely a pastor or pastoral counsellor) whereas White/Epston choose not to focus on interpretation and change that paradigm to “thin” and “thick” stories. The process in White/Epston’s case will therefore aim more toward “thickening” stories and developing multistoried verbalisation of experiences rather than to interpret it according to any given frame from their side. White/Epston thus leave their conversationalist empowered to perform his or her own subjective hermeneutics.

in the meaning-making process rather than interpreting it for them in the manner suggested by the Boysen/Gerkin hermeneutical model. Even in the case of externalisation of the problem, an interpretative manoeuvre by therapists, they might use, for example, the word ‘depression’ as a part of the person’s language and medical knowledge about their experience. However they would still look for and respect the person’s own wording or interpretation of that experience. Andrew Lester builds on this and provides a foundational contribution that I see as integrating narrative ideas in a pastoral context. The emphasis is on the future, considering and highlighting the elements of hope and time.

3.1.2 Andrew Lester: Narratives and temporality - future and hope

Andrew D. Lester, formerly an American professor of pastoral theology, focuses on narratives of hope and future. The main dynamics in psychology and theology are hope and despair says Lester, and pastoral care and counselling is historically concerned with healing, guiding, sustaining (Hiltner, 1958), along with reconciling (Clebsch and Jaekle, 1964) and liberating (Lester, 2010). In research edited by Oates and Lester in 1968 it was found that people are worried not so much with past or even present suffering but more with possible happenings in the future. Unfortunately, claims Lester, the theology of hope has not had a significant impact on the pastoral theology or pastoral care and counselling literature. Lester finds the reason for neglecting the subject of hope lies in the basis of teaching and practice of pastoral care and counselling. It is about perceiving the nature of human existence as rooted in the anthropological worldview that relies on cognitions of social and behavioural sciences. Pastoral theology, on the other hand, allows for critique of both human sciences and Christian tradition and theology, and “integrates what seems truthful from both into a holistic, anthropologically sound theology.” It is therefore necessary for pastoral theology to “attend to the anthropological concepts of time” as they are conceptualized by philosophy, human sciences and systematic theology but also to re-examine the relationship between time-consciousness and a personal experience of suffering. Through this dialogue then a pastoral theology of hope should be constructed.

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The anthropological context in which Lester’s pastoral theology of hope finds its roots is based in three sources: temporality – the three tenses of past, present and future are the basic context for human consciousness; narrative theory – selfhood is created in the form of story or a narrative that is including all three dimensions of temporality; “phenomenological assessment of human brokenness” – human suffering is created not only by personal history and present surrounding circumstances but also by the changed perceptions of the awaited future. Lester is pointing to the existential philosopher’s definition of temporality as a basic characteristic of the human condition that our every present moment is affected by our remembering and interpreting the past and, our every future moment by anticipating and creating meaning. Existentialism highlights that we cannot escape the passing of time but are embedded in it, yet time is also giving us freedom to shape our selfhood, community and future. For some existentialists, such as Jean-Paul Sartre, future tense is the most important aspect of a person’s identity because of the element of “potentiality” and the capacity of “becoming” therefore, as Lester points out, “the future tense grants to the present tense the gift of possibility. The self-who-is-becoming, the self who is exploring possibility, is the primary modality of authentic selfhood.”

In Lester’s pastoral theology there are two building blocks. The first is to see human beings as “multi-tensed,” living in past, present and future simultaneously, and this time-consciousness is foundational for the existential context we live in. Lester finds theological support in the temporal activity of God and in Paul’s trilogy of faith, hope and love, which contrary to the traditional linkage of faith with a past, love to a present and hope to a future, are actually spiritual dynamics which are all to be found in each time dimension. Secondly, the future is less fixed than the past and present, and provides more potential for growth, development and becoming. The future dimension therefore provides purpose and meaning and contributes crucially to the human enterprise, offering also the necessary context for responding to God’s love for us. Lester wants all pastoral carers to remember that “the stressful situation is happening within the context of a time frame that includes both a history and expectations.”

15 Lester, Hope, 18.
16 Lester, Hope, 26.
Lester builds his approach on several narrative theorists: (1) Theodore Sarbin’s concept of narrative as a new “root metaphor” for interpreting and explaining the human condition and “narratory principle” to be found in the narrative structure according to which humans think, perceive, imagine and make moral choices. (2) Stephen Crites’ observation that humans organize, make sense of and mentally process their experience by the means of narration. (3) Stanley Hauerwas’ notions that we catch the connection between our actions through narrative. (4) Jerome Bruner’s narrative mode, saying that humans use explaining the purposes of their behaviour or making sense of experienced events. Therefore, these elements of narrative theory, provide for Lester “an alternative way of comprehending selfhood and personal identity,” confirming the storied nature of human personality where identity is being constructed both by conscious as well as by suppressed stories. People thus build their “core narratives” as a “set of parameters” of their sense of self, and develop their own personal understandings and values about the concepts of marriage, money, sex, discipline, work etc.

When discussing the relation between narrative and temporality Lester again builds on, and synthesizes from various authors. Stephen Crites emphasises that the separate modalities of time, past, present and future, become integrated in the self of a person by the use of narrative. Paul Ricoeur points out that time itself becomes human time only when organised after the manner of narrative, and that in turn narrative brings meaning to temporal existence. Theodore Sarbin is also referring to the temporal dimension of transferring human actions into stories and Keneth Gergen and Mary Gergen highlight that people consciously process their experience into stories, which they call “self-narratives,” and by this continuous process give a temporal nature to the events as well. Lester points out that all those three dimensions of time-consciousness structure a person’s identity, and future stories also form selfhood. Lester concludes that

the core narratives that form our personal identity are shaped by future anticipations as well as by previous experience… Narrative theory, therefore, supports the significance of future tense in human existence and contributes to the philosophical anthropology that is foundational to a pastoral theology of hope.

17 Lester, Hope, 27-29.
18 Lester, Hope, 30.
19 Lester, Hope, 33.
Lester describes stories as “going somewhere” and that reaching beyond the present moment makes people “future tensed.” This forces them to imagine the “what-happens-next” answers and project their core narratives into the future. The present moment is where a person’s past is assessed, re-collected and organised into an identity. As Lester describes the position of Crites, this is not a static point but a process where future tense is a “scenario of anticipation.”

When developing future stories we are not only a self but also becoming a self, we are a “self-in-progress,” a dynamic identity that can “re-collect” the past and “pro-ject” itself into the future. Narrative structuring through time is accomplished through two related components (here Lester draws on the work of Gergens). Firstly when a narrative establishes “a goal state” with “valued ending” so that individual’s biography gets its “future reference” with an aim and direction. Secondly when a plot and events are so arranged, selected and organised that it makes reaching the established goal probable. With these two components involved the future story contributes to hope, otherwise the person is vulnerable to despair.²⁰

Individual stories about our self are intertwined with the stories of other selves and personal narrative is embedded in other narratives. Narratives emerge from family and social contexts as products of “social interchange” and, as constructivists teach, they are before all “communal products” that also shape our future. Lester believes that systems “establish future stories that model scenarios that are the ‘right’ ones, the future stories toward which ‘smart’ people, or ‘good’ people, or ‘Christian’ people should be living.”²¹

Because all of human life is storied, people also shape their religious experience by creating narratives that become sacred stories, the stories of faith that form the religious identity of the person. In Christian narrative, says Lester, future tense is in the centre of its sacred story and Christians are “on the way,” building on the core narratives from which they live, and simultaneously establishing the core narratives toward which they live. To emphasise the importance of the communal aspect of the story, Lester builds on Hauerwas, noting that only through the stories of others and their relationship with God can we come to know the story.

²⁰ Lester, Hope, 36-37.
²¹ Lester, Hope, 39.
of God. Finally, the integrity of pastoral care and counselling is to be found, as Lester summarises, in theological anthropology that includes people’s stories in their entire temporality of past, present and future, and the person can be appropriately cared for only when the future stories are attended to.

For Lester, the relationship between stories and human brokenness is located in the experience of grief and bereavement as “future stories lost.” In a narrative context anticipatory grief is therefore, “preparing for the loss or potential loss of a future story” where some important aspects of a person’s future projected core narrative will not continue to take part in his or her future story. With future stories broken, warns Lester, the hoping process is threatened.

He summarises the anthropological building blocks of his pastoral theology of hope:

> Time-consciousness must be recognised as a basic component of the existential context of human existence; future tense is a primary dimension of this temporality; humans are storied creatures who, through narrative principles, develop core narratives that structure their sense of self-in-the-world; future stories are basic elements in these core narratives; all human brokenness is inescapably connected to disturbances in a future dimension of temporality.

The anticipation of the future, named as the “capacity to hope,” is ontologically given to all humans, says Lester. The hoping process has a narrative structure that emerges through a constant development of the future stories that contain our anticipation of the future and, consequently, hope. Lester recognises two categories of hope: Finite hope - where we as finite creatures invest hope in finite objects, desires and processes; and Transfinite hope which is “placed in subjects and processes that go beyond physiological sensing and the material world.” For a connection between the two hopes in an ideal case, says Lester, “we keep our finite hopes in the context of our transfinite hope, our sacred story,” and, paraphrasing Dietrich Ritschl here, that “ultimate hope” allows people to have little, concrete and “time-bound” hopes.

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22 Lester, Hope, 49-51.
23 Lester, Hope, 57.
24 Lester, Hope, 56.
25 Lester, Hope, 62-64.
26 Lester, Hope, 67.
Pastoral care and counselling have to nurture hope: “Valid hope must exist in the context of a transfinite hope and focus on the open-ended horizon.”27 That approach to pastoral care and counselling differs from the problem-oriented or solution-oriented methods of therapy and is looking for the larger story, the core narrative, that gives a context for the problem, and will seek to question and listen to the ultimate concerns of the person. Without ultimate hope and the horizon of an open-ended future, warns Lester, hopelessness will return.

Lester refers to linguistic systems theory and the assumption that people make meaning through communication. Contrary to the common belief that social systems create language and symbols, linguistic systems theory claims the opposite - that language and communication create the social system. Through the social process of dialog and conversation people build relationships, and by creating stories and core narratives form their identities. Therefore, “pastoral conversation” is a central “methodology” in the reconstruction of future stories and Lester defines it as “conversation that is intentionally directed by the pastoral caregiver (at any level of pastoral care and counseling) so that professional skill can be focused on the task of healing, guiding, sustaining, reconciling, and liberating.”28 Above all, pastoral intervention is thus the task of language that serves as a vehicle for both construction and deconstruction.

When working with future stories the pastoral caregiver or counsellor will first be focused on “taking a history” and then in exploring future stories that have to be “invited” into a dialogue. Lester stresses that he is trying to find “the earliest possible time to introduce the idea of future into a conversation.” Another step for the pastoral caregiver is tracking and expanding future stories and therapeutic goals for that phase of the assessment process including:

- to experience how persons project themselves into the future, to identify the specific content of their future stories, to assess the connection between their future stories and their present circumstances, and to discover whether their future stories are contributing to hopefulness or helplessness.29

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27 Lester, Hope, 71.
28 Lester, Hope, 104.
29 Lester, Hope, 109.
During this process the pastoral caregiver also has to hear the larger narrative or a contextual story from which the future story emerges. Strategies suggested by Lester for use when exploring future stories include storytelling, writing, journaling about everyday experiences, using guided imagery or artwork such as painting, sculpting or drawing. He recommends utilising ‘as if’ conversations, use of dreams as ‘unconscious future stories,’ applying free associations as when a person has difficulty conceptualising the future story and, finally, for persons stuck within the past, bound by the present or troubled about exploring the future, Lester will limit conversations only to the future and its stories.\(^{30}\)

When referring to a person’s resistance toward exploring future stories, Lester says they might be repressed or suppressed and feel threatened as a result of experiencing past events. Such resistance might be recognised by

- ignoring the existence of future stories or refusing to discuss their content;
- defining the obvious hopelessness in the content of these future stories;
- denying the contributions of these future stories to an unhelpful hoping process and the intrusion of despair; and refusing to reframe them in ways that aid the hoping process.\(^{31}\)

Lester defines functionality: “*Functional* future stories are those future projections of our core narratives that open up life and invite us into an exciting, meaningful tomorrow.”\(^{32}\) Such stories are “hope-full,” sit easily with narrative approaches and answer the question “What happens next?” giving meaning and purpose to life and completing life’s narrative with satisfying and energising “plot endings” that raise trust for the continuation of life. The pastoral caregiver or counsellor has to confront a person’s dysfunctional future stories by reclaiming, revising, rehabilitating and reframing. Change occurs with restructuring a person’s stories and the core narratives that shape their personal identity, sense of self and expression of selfhood which is created by unique personal interpretations of life events or stories about them. The dismantling of dysfunctional future stories happens as a result of the use of “deconstruction” which Lester uses in its literal and psychotherapeutic meaning. Literary criticism describes deconstruction as “the process of dissecting a text into its component parts

\(^{30}\) Lester, *Hope*, 109-114.
\(^{31}\) Lester, *Hope*, 117.
\(^{32}\) Lester, *Hope*, 125. Italics by Lester.
for analysis” while psychotherapy defines it as “the attempt of a therapist to change a client’s perception of reality.”

Additionally, constructivist psychotherapy advocates that a client’s “perception” or construction of the problem actually “is” the problem. Lester is actually applying deconstruction in three steps: to assess that the future story is fully understood according to the available past and present stories; “to learn thoroughly the content from which the future story was constructed;” and “to uncover the relevant data that could have been included in a particular future story.” Pastoral assessment of future stories must also evaluate the adequacy and validity of their theological and cultural context in order to deconstruct and confront the “theology of despair,” negative God images and contextual family or larger systems narratives that are threatening or limiting.

In the Christian context, future stories also pass through “spiritual revisioning,” for the Christian story transcends present reality or even life’s limitations. Therefore, for pastoral care and counselling, the hoping process moves from finite to transfinite, thus connecting personal goals and “short-term hopes” with “long-term hope” and sacred story as a progressive narrative. Lester concludes that when a pastoral caregiver introduces, interjects, or invites this sacred story into pastoral conversation with a person whose narrative is regressive, a clash of narratives occurs. This progressive, hopeful sacred story has the power to overcome a dysfunctional, regressive story and bring transformation into a person’s faith narrative. The future is opened and a person’s horizons are expanded. The God who calls us into an open-ended future, who grants grace for the present moment and energy for the journey is ‘discovered’.

3.2 Contemporary expressions: Narratives and pastoral context

Christie Cozad Neuger presents a contemporary view on the specific topic of ministry to women with some basic elements of narrative ideas embodied within her writing.

3.2.1 Christie Cozad Neuger: A narrative pastoral approach for counselling women

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33 Lester, Hope, 128.
34 Lester, Hope, 131-132.
35 Lester, Hope, 152.
Christie Cozad Neuger developed her narrative pastoral approach with a focus on counselling women. She critiques the psychopathological orientation of personality theories. “I believe that we find what we look for in counselling. If we look for problems, for inconsistencies, and for deviance, then that’s where we will focus in the counselling work.” Neuger points out that working within a narrative framework implies certain philosophical and psychological assumptions which guide the counsellor’s questions as well as intentions for listening. The personal theology of the pastoral counsellor is at the root, and deeply connected with his/her own narrative practice. Every person has “an operational theology that guides the formation of their value systems and their sense of purpose in life,” and pastoral counsellors have to be reflectively conscious of the content of personal theology that guides them in their ministry.

Neuger outlines theological themes that “form the hermeneutical and interpretative norms through which [she] assesses the process of pastoral counseling and within which [she tries] to create pastoral counselling strategies that serve to live them out.” Four theological themes shape her therapeutic “focus of commitment,” themes that resonate with the research respondents’ practice.

1. **Prevenient grace.** Each person is surrounded by God’s love and assurance even before they know of God’s existence. The believer’s life in faith can emerge from confidence in God’s love, and for one to accept God and to be able to respond to God’s care, prevenient grace is “the necessary condition.” Neuger suggests the theme of prevenient grace offers a counterpoint to the strong message of the dominant culture about women not belonging and not being valued, as well as to other marginalised persons. It values the reality of the person, takes it seriously and a person is embraced as beloved.

2. **The power of community in the body of Christ.** Interactions with other people and groups form each of us. Communities we live in do not always express love and justice, and a negative sense of self and future can be reinforced by them. However, communities that truly serve as the body of Christ and reflect God’s power of love and justice by expressing supportiveness

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39 The following summary is from Neuger, *Women*, 57 – 61.
and truthfulness to women are a resource for overturning the evils and negativities of cultural oppressions.

(3) *The richness and complexity of the divine presence in many images of God.* Through the images of God we experience and interpret our personal relationship with God. Through them our self-esteem and trust in God are strengthened and works well as a sense of our partnership in God’s ongoing work of creation. Consequently, if the dominant culture limits the possibilities for those images to be used it will also restrict our experience of God’s unlimited abundance. Neuger finds this to be particularly harmful for women, and that engaging with God’s image of “relational justice” serves both people and communities well.

(4) *The biblical theme of Exodus.* This theme Neuger finds the most fundamental in her work with women. The narrative has several sections that might be used in counselling and every pastoral counselling relationship might draw analogies in the process from the dynamic of the Exodus story. It is a metaphor for the journey from the oppressive world and isolation to the sense of liberation and community in the new land of integrity and congruence.

Neuger refers further to theological questions as “lenses of assessment” to enable pastoral counsellors to help counselees identify their theological and religious foundations, dominant stories and beliefs that guide their lives and support their growth.

(1) *The “what’s at stake” question.* This goes behind behaviours, thoughts and feelings about the problem presented. It asks about a person’s deeper goals, possibilities, risks and fears. Spirituality and ultimate meaning are at stake here.

(2) *How people imagine God perceives them.* This reversal question leads to deeper meaning and perception of a person’s relationship with God.

(3) *How does a person experience God’s grace in her/his life?* This complements the previous question and helps counsellors understand interpretative themes and automatic assumptions that the counselee makes about the value and moral goodness of her/his life, deserved or undeserved grace or judgement and the general approach to the world and themselves.

(4) *Finally, questions about community issues.* How does a person understand herself/himself in relation to the rest of the body of believers? Is it an emotionally, physically and intellectually appropriate connection? Or is there a distance? Is there separation, isolation or autonomy? Or is there interdependence and mutuality? How does the body of believers influence and shape the person? What are the roles and rules in those relationships?
In conclusion, the theological themes serve as “normative theological priorities” while the assessment category questions help in the counselling process. Echoing narrative practices, Neuger also uses “five R’s” for helping women gain clarity: Remembering, Reframing, Reversing: as in Mary Daly’s reversing of “the great reversals of patriarchy ... as “much greater truth for women’s lives,” Re-imagining, Re-storying.

Further theological integration is found in Neil Pembroke’s exploration of the deeper relation between Trinitarian theology and narrative ideas in the context of pastoral care and counselling.

3.2.2 Neil Pembroke: Narrative elements in Trinitarian pastoral care and counselling

Neil Pembroke is Associate Professor of Practical Theology at the University of Queensland, Australia. He explored the relationship between the doctrine of the Trinity and pastoral care and counselling. This relational aspect is fundamental to the theology of the Trinity and is also central for pastoral work, having the potential “to make a major contribution to pastoral theology and practice.” David Cunningham, according to Pembroke, finds triune marks in human existence and sees them as “imprints of the divine” that point to the way of life God invites humans to live - polyphony, participation and particularity. Pembroke sees pastoral care as a polyphony with the categories of firstly wisdom and folly and secondly, communion, nearness and distance. He highlights the polyphonic nature of pastoral care ministry in the images of shepherd and his/her toughness and tenderness, wounded healer and his/her woundedness and health, and the wise fool and his/her wisdom and folly.

41 Neuger, Women, 141 – 147.  
42 Neuger, Women, 141.  
43 Reframing “takes the content of a story as accurate and truthful and then offers new angles from which to see and make meaning,” Neuger, Women, 142.  
45 Neuger, Women, 144.  
46 Neuger, Women, 145.  
47 Neuger, Women, 145.  
49 Pembroke, Renewing, 14.
An important theme for Pembroke is “managing the space” between divine persons by sharing in closeness and in the full harmony of perfect love to the point of the contracted relational space of perfect giving and receiving. It is achieved without misunderstanding, animosity or selfishness and with openness to expression of each person’s particularities. Through that lens Pembroke views two important pastoral issues: the practice of hospitality and the relationship between acceptance and confrontation. Pembroke points out that the *imago Dei* is also the *imago trinitatis* and humans, being made in the image of God, are therefore made for the communal life. The individual-in-relation mirrors the divine life of the Trinity, and by the privilege of divine communion is called to build Christian communities by the trinitarian dynamics of *kenosis* and *perichoresis*. *Kenosis* is an emptying of the self in order to be receptive to the other, both person and God. *Perichoresis* means “being-in-one-another,” a “permeation without confusion.” It is a mutual indwelling in the relationship with the Trinity as a closeness aiming toward unity in love and also with an open space between the divine persons that allows the maintenance of their particularity.

Through a Trinitarian dynamic Pembroke views three core counselling concerns: the therapeutic alliance, empathy and mirroring. A three-dimensional therapeutic alliance mirroring the life of the Trinity involves counsellor, counsellee and his/her support person. Pembroke builds on the ideas of French philosopher Francis Jacques by engaging the themes of communication and interpersonal life. There are always three agencies involved in a personal discourse in Jacques’ model. Communication is an event where two subjects address each other (the “I” and the “you”) in the context of an absent third party (the “he/she”). Pembroke finds that within a narrative therapy approach and its searching for the “nurturing third” such a “tripersonal framework” has it strongest feature, and contains in its structure “an image or mark of the triune God.” Counsellors of any therapy school are aware of the importance other people have as a positive client resource.

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51 Pembroke, *Renewing*, 53.
52 The “tri-agential” approach differs from Buber’s dialogical understanding of the “I-Thou” encounter more commonly used among counsellors today. Pembroke, *Renewing*, 59.
53 The “nurturing third” for Pembroke is Michael White’s “outsider witness.”
However, for Pembroke, the narrative school comprehensively developed the role of a third party by including a “nurturing third” to strengthen the re-storying processes and the emergence of a counter-story and identifying two key premises of narrative counselling: “human existence has a storied structure … [and] … all social reality is a human construct.”

People make meaning by telling stories about themselves and that meaning is shaped by dominant cultural myths. Some of the ideas or beliefs embedded in the culture can contribute to personal ‘problem stories’ and therefore, in narrative counselling, they will be exposed to deconstructive analysis. An important goal of narrative approaches, says Pembroke, is discovering as many as possible “unique outcomes” or “sparkling moments” that are exceptions inside the problem story.

The practitioner then enables clients to make such moments and outcomes strong and vivid in their alternative stories and their lives. For this reason narrative counsellors invite support persons like friends and family members to be an “appreciative audience” thus applying and reinforcing the community’s vital role in the healing and growth of the person. Pembroke finds that the “relational alliance” of these three – the counsellor, the counsellee and the “nurturing third” – echo the Trinity. Although it might be a faint echo, Pembroke, in his expression, contends “that wherever we find persons connected to each other in a communion of love it is appropriate to speak of a mark of the Trinity.”

Carrie Doehring takes this discussion into premodern, modern and postmodern perspectives of narrative and relates this to pastoral settings.

### 3.2.3 Carrie Doehring: A “trifocal” approach with narrative elements

Carrie Doehring is a Presbyterian minister and professor of pastoral care and counselling. Her model of pastoral care uses a “trifocal lens” taking into account the three approaches to knowledge and their use in pastoral care settings: premodern, modern and postmodern. A premodern lens assumes that we reach relationship with God through sacred texts, religious rituals or traditions and spiritual experiences. A modern lens uses rational and empirical

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methods whether it be a biblical critical method or knowledge of medical or social sciences in understanding God. A postmodern lens sees knowledge, also the knowledge of God, as contextual and provisional.\(^5^6\)

Doehring’s pastoral care approach begins with a conversation leading to narratives about the self, family, community and culture of the careseeker. Doehring finds stories to be a comfortable and safe way for people to start conversations about their life/problem issues. Caregivers who, as Doehring puts it, “merge” with details of a person’s narrative are more likely to comprehend the complexity and multi-meanings which could easily get lost by moving too quickly toward using diagnostic categories. Using stories is also a more natural as well as different way of providing pastoral care. A narrative approach enables the pastoral carer “to convey a greater sense of presence” than an approach conceptualised beforehand.\(^5^7\)

Doehring presents five principles for careful listening to stories and, using White’s term, for “co-authoring” meaningful stories of parishioner’s lives; stories are highly personal and idiosyncratic; in crisis people tell stories to make sense of their experience; the more a careseeker’s story can become multilayered the more it will sustain or transform him or her; the deeper and more threatening the crisis, the more changes the stories will contain; the context (family, community and culture) where stories are shaped may help with suffering or make it worse.\(^5^8\) She highlights the long history of narrative approaches in pastoral care. Anton Boisen, the father of the Clinical Pastoral Education movement, taught chaplains in the 1930’s to approach patients as “living human documents.”\(^5^9\) Charles Gerkin built upon this metaphor in his incarnational theology, describing “the fusion of horizons,” the analogical fusion of human narratives and God’s narratives that transforms humanity. That fusion takes place through the experience of events, especially crises, where God is hidden. The human interpreter’s horizon, through experiencing these events, creates new meaning and possible transformation. This horizon of meaning has a narrative aspect and becomes a story. Pastoral


\(^{57}\) Doehring, *The Practice*, 66.

\(^{58}\) These principles are part of understanding grief in a constructivist psychological approach as presented by Robert A. Niemeyer. Doehring, *The Practice*, 67-69.

\(^{59}\) The appropriateness of the term “narrative approach” might be questioned here.
care therefore seeks to merge those human stories and God’s stories or narratives and produce a new meaning, new life and the offer of eschatological identity.\textsuperscript{60}

Doehring also indicates some of the limitations of only using a narrative approach. Firstly, under the influence of individualistic culture caregivers may focus more on the person than on the cultural context. Secondly, if caregivers listen to the care-seeker’s stories as “artistic renderings of life” they might become immersed in the mystical and aesthetical aspects of the careseeker’s narrative and miss the moral aspects. During the postmodern search for multiple meanings caregivers may consequently err by not “making judgments about the moral dimensions of a careseeker’s story” and not “positing provisional faith claims that can become the basis for a plan of care.”\textsuperscript{61}

\textbf{3.2.4 Ruard Ganzevoort – Six dimensions narrative model}

Ruard Ganzevoort weaves together aspects of religious life, pastoral practice, theology and narrative. He is Professor of Practical Theology at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Ganzevoort reminds us of a long history of the relationship between narratives and religion and their contemporary presence through all aspects of theological reflection to practical theology. Ganzevoort sees at least three dimensions in narrative approaches that in practice blend together.

The first uses narrative forms in practical ministry and religious communication (like preaching and pastoral care). The second involves empirical analysis and deconstruction of religious subjectivity that is inherent to narrative. The third empowers marginalized voices by creating an audience for their stories.\textsuperscript{62}

Ganzevoort proposes a formal six-dimensional narrative model that can be used for research, analysis of verbatim pastoral conversations or sermons, and for other practical theological purposes. This model has four dimensions for story – “structure,” “perspective,” “tone” and “role assignments” – and two dimensions that “regard the relation with the audience” – “relational positioning” and “justification for an audience.”\textsuperscript{63} Ganzevoort evaluates the

\textsuperscript{60} Doehring, \textit{The Practice}, 66. See also Thomas St. James O’Connor, \textit{Clinical Pastoral Supervision and the Theology of Charles Gerkin} (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1998), 42-44.

\textsuperscript{61} Doehring, \textit{The Practice}, 167.


\textsuperscript{63} Ganzevoort, “Narrative Approaches,” 219-221.
narrative approach by summing up some promises and critiques. A narrative approach: creates the possibility of the interaction of biblical theology and practical theology in their relation to what Clinical Pastoral Education calls the “living human document;” offers a metatheoretical framework of narrative perspective that has a strong potential to serve interdisciplinary communication and research between theology and social science; takes “a narrative turn that involves a hermeneutical stance in which the individual biography and religious construction are valued over general descriptions and statistical averages;” and avoids theoretical alienation because of proximity to the practices studied.

Ganzevoort’s balanced critique identifies the risk of preferring verbal, cerebral or cognitive knowledge because of the focus on words and meaning when seemingly “limited attention to power issues and vested interests” and reveals a tendency to honour subjectivity and forgo normativity by “assuming human stories as equally normative as biblical stories.” Helpfully, and this is a formation concern, both promises and critiques will be valued according to one’s preference of specific narrative approach and one’s theological perspective.\(^6^4\) The question of application within practice is informed and sharpened by Dinkins, Hays and Galvin as they evaluate and outline practical applications in a pastoral context.

3.3 Examples of practical application of narrative practices in a pastoral setting

3.3.1 Burrell David Dinkins: Narrative pastoral counselling

Burrell David Dinkins has been a pastoral counsellor and educator within a narrative pastoral approach for more than thirty years. If we want to know someone, says Dinkins, we have to know his or her story, not the finished one but the one in creation and under constant revision. Our personal stories are what make us human because “each person is a collection of stories” and when an old person dies it is “like a library burning down.”\(^6^5\) We create stories but stories also form and guide us, giving direction to our lives.

Dinkins is aware of the uncertainty of the postmodern world where narrative finds its place in comparison to the modern “land of logical analysis” claiming that we cannot live in both worlds simultaneously but that a choice has to be made about the road to travel. For Dinkins

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\(^6^4\) Ganzevoort, *Narrative Approaches*, 221-222.

the joy he found in working with stories is what helped him decide. There is a connection
between narrative counselling and biblical narratives for Dinkins. Narratives are “the primary
means of communicating the Christian faith” and can be expressed by different authors and
from various contexts.66 Dinkins claims a “narrative conversation” is the best description of
his pastoral counselling work, seeing conversations as a “language play” with mutual
participation by storyteller and storylistener. They both participate in interactive storying and
re-storying, and co-create in such conversations a “specific kind of knowing that is both
relational and personal.” Building on Kevin Brandt, Dinkins defines the terms: “Storytelling
places the action in the one telling the story. Storylistening usually indicates a passive action
of the one hearing the story. Storying conversations is a dynamic interaction between all
parties in the conversation.”67 Narrative conversations are therefore “imaginative creations”
where one’s past is provided with meaning through the whole storying process, unlike cause
and effect thinking as represented in a logical-scientific model. Personal experiences of real
events become storied like their “temporal symbolisation,” and create space for the larger
story to be told or heard. Narrative conversations depend upon “language, culture, social
relationships, context, content, construction and tone of the stories” and are especially
powerful forms of communication with literary plots and sub-plots.68

Dinkins finds narrative conversations effective in leaving the counsellor’s expert or
professional position to become more of a friend in conversation. Here Dinkins accepts and
applies Michael White, who uses Jerome Bruner’s metaphor of landscapes of action and
landscapes of consciousness.69 He sees narrative conversations as “landscapes painted by an
artist,” commonly used way to make sense out of our life experiences. This art approach is
more oriented towards creating possibilities than settling for certainties and is more an artistic
creation than a new counselling technique. In the end a real life becomes understood as an
art form.

66 Dinkins, Narrative, 14.
67 Dinkins, Narrative, 15.
68 Dinkins, Narrative, 15.
69 Narrative therapy’s “landscape of consciousness” can be “landscape of identity” or “landscape of intention.”
Dinkins finds that using narrative as a root metaphor or a structural framework of pastoral counselling enabled him to shift his thinking from a “pathology-based psychology” to the point where the client has become his “fellow narrative conversationalist.” However, the difference between a narrative pastoral conversation and a friendship conversation is primarily found in “intentionality” and “flow.” Intentionality in the pastoral context has its focus more on helping people, listening more intentionally to the problem story and asking more specific questions which all create a specific “narrative flow” that is different from a friendly conversation. He argues that “one of the best ways to care for people is to care for their stories” and that is why our caring conversations should be treated as opportunities for “conversational hospitality.”

In applying this approach the focus then should not be so much on interpretation and action, which are integrated with the narrative, but on listening to the whole story which “is more important than any one element of it.” Dinkins sees the role of the narrative counsellor as assisting the development of the “solution story” or a “better story” that gives hope to a person. Such personally created new stories bring the most hope because the creator of the story himself or herself “owns the story.” The helper’s primary role is thus to assist in the development of such hopeful and future-oriented stories.

It is also better to listen for meanings without trying to fit what is heard into some particular theoretical framework so “an unknowing attitude” enables the listener to stay neutral when listening. This is a “position of curiosity” and is not about looking for hidden agendas because Dinkins, with all other narrative therapists, believes “that stories create meaning in the very act of telling and listening.” When people share stories in mutual conversations it is more about learning together than discovering a truth waiting to be revealed, because a teller will modify stories so they fit “into another person’s frame of reference and social context.” That is why, importantly, such a “narrative listening,” like “narrative telling,” creates new meanings that accordingly initiate new actions. He suggests that conversational helpers and listeners

70 Dinkins, Narrative, 16.
71 Dinkins, Narrative, 17.
72 Dinkins, Narrative, 26.
73 Dinkins, Narrative, 22
74 Dinkins, Narrative, 23.
should “listen with large ears,” telling and listening to stories, thus building community because “if there are no stories, there is no community.”\textsuperscript{75}

Dinkins prefers a narrative counselling approach for the following reasons: it is less stressful, more interesting, uses natural language, uses everyday words, avoids judging, diagnosing, giving explanations or directly advising people about what to do, and at the end of the counsellor’s day leaves him or her energized and inspired by the stories created in collaboration with a counsellee.\textsuperscript{76}

An important difference between narrative and other counselling approaches is in “inside-outside conversations” or the use of an inductive rather than a deductive approach in pastoral conversations. A narrative approach in general focuses on peoples’ stories rather than listening to their problems. When “knowing through stories” applies within an inductive approach it will move from a smaller to a larger message, trying to “get a broader perspective of the story” by asking “sincere questions.” In a deductive approach, on the other hand, the listener will search for “bits and pieces of information that fit into a specific way of thinking” where, unfortunately, ownership of the story shifts from “the teller to the listener who then claims the power to name and define the meaning of the story.”

Dinkins uses the term “pastoral conversation” as synonymous with pastoral counselling. By replacing the word counselling with conversation Dinkins emphasises “the natural flow of communication in a conversational relationship of respect and mutuality,” where people share their relationships within ethical boundaries. The specialized and expert role of a counsellor within a medical model is only one pathway to effective pastoral service, suggests Dinkins, warning that diagnostically categorizing people might easily lead toward taking a dominant position over the other person, an inappropriate stance within pastoral relationships. A pastoral relationship respects the specific way in which each person views their stories, as far as the talker and the listener are concerned, where no one is superior to the other and both learn equally from the conversation. By using conversation as a metaphor, instead of counselling, Dinkins also underlines the distance from counselling that might be

\textsuperscript{75} Dinkins, Narrative, 24-25.
\textsuperscript{76} Dinkins, Narrative, 23.
mainly understood as advice or therapy. He suggests that people “are not objects to be changed by telling them to do specific things; they are not sick persons to be healed. They are individuals looking for a more hopeful story.” This argues for a strong link to pastoral and spiritual care when the practitioner is working within the parameters of faith.

In narrative conversations there is no script to follow but new stories are co-authored and co-created based on the elements of previous experiences. Dinkins accordingly aims to “approach each person as a mystery story waiting to be told,” and with each retelling, the story is told differently, being “recreated, revised and re-framed.” Conversational questions might explore the past, present or future and Dinkins, as conversation develops, aims more toward future-oriented questions, emphasising the beginnings and the endings as especially important. Therefore the purpose of conversation has to be established clearly and early, but also a person involved has to “know the conversation was worthwhile by the way it ends.” In order to achieve that, Dinkins suggests that pastoral conversationalists “work from a strong sense of curiosity along with a ‘not-knowing’ mind set,” or as expressed elsewhere, a “not-knowing-but-wanting-to-learn-approach.” In such a way conversations become like teamwork where both parties invest their interests for the desired outcome and both act as active co-creators of new stories. Thereby, a pastoral conversation becomes a complementary relationship between two conversing souls grounded in equality.

Dinkins believes that stories do not just happen to people but they are created by them through the process of making “meaningful narratives about specific events” whereby “events are important, but the stories about them are even more important.” Such an approach illustrates the impact of postmodernity that avoids explaining, interpreting and arguing in order to achieve rational understanding but prefers stories and the way they embrace human experience. Yet even then, nobody tells

a complete story because no story can capture the richness of an experience. The portions left out, especially the exceptions to the theme of the story, may be as important as the parts included in the story. Stories are present experiences as much as described past experiences. They create reality from

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77 Dinkins, Narrative, 32.  
78 Dinkins, Narrative, 33-34.  
79 Dinkins, Narrative, 42.  
80 Dinkins, Narrative, 35.
what has been experienced and, in turn, create new experiences from the telling.\textsuperscript{81}

Dinkins is convinced that the next revolution in care ministry will happen together with the realization that “meaning creation,” which is emerging through storytelling and storylistening, “represents the mind and spirit equivalent of the body’s immune system.” He sees a pastoral conversation as a spiritual relationship, and its healing potential, although it can be found in any other narrative conversation, is here even more present in facilitating God’s healing power through the stories created in the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Dinkins describes a shifting of focus and a big difference between problem-oriented and solution-oriented conversations. A problem-centred approach focuses primarily on what is wrong and what isn’t working, while a solution-centred approach aims toward conversations that emphasise creating solutions. Here Dinkins identifies a famous narrative slogan: “The person is not the problem; the problem is the problem,” concentrating on the story “as a narrative with a life of its own” and looking for exceptions in the problem dynamics. This is more future-oriented because “the past is best understood from the perspective of the future” and the signs of hope and enthusiasm found in future narratives energize all the parties involved in the conversations.\textsuperscript{82} Because “we chose not to know until it was told to us” and we deliberately avoid guessing or making assumptions, careful questioning is important because they are “indirect requests. They are a call to action – action that leads to experience.” Questions create new possibilities and “communicate a caring interest” for the life of the other person in order to gain a wider perspective on the story,\textsuperscript{83} remembering that there is no such thing as a value-free question that does not have some embedded meaning or implication in relation to the questioner.\textsuperscript{84} Dinkins describes his style as that of a “curious researcher without a predetermined hypothesis, not trying to prove or disprove anything, but hoping to know the person and the story this person wants to tell. The better I can suppress a desire to be helpful, the more the person is helped.”\textsuperscript{85}

\textsuperscript{81} Dinkins, Narrative, 36.
\textsuperscript{82} Dinkins, Narrative, 44-47.
\textsuperscript{83} Dinkins, Narrative, 49-52.
\textsuperscript{84} Dinkins, Narrative, 54.
\textsuperscript{85} Dinkins, Narrative, 55.
Narrative pastoral conversations, notes Dinkins, are also “faith conversations” where both belief in a narrative process as well as trust in the presence of the Holy Spirit are present. Re-authoring a faith story helps people find God’s wisdom and strength, and helps her or him develop a new vision for his or her life as seen through the lens of the spiritual journey. Dinkins ends his book with the words of hope and future: “A future worth living has to be imagined as story worth believing before it is realized.”

3.3.2 Jason D. Hays: Narrative pastoral counselling

Jason D. Hays is a pastor, counsellor and theologian with a PhD in pastoral theology and pastoral counselling. Hays describes narrative practice as a collaborative and non-pathologizing approach that views people as experts in their own lives and is based on the premise of persons carrying embodied wisdom and resources to help them through life changes. The inherent strengths which people possess will emerge through the right support and facilitation in the context of deep respect. It is a consultative style rather than an expert-client counselling relationship with the goal of strengthening the person’s preferred identity. Hayes notes that often clergy counsellors are frequently the first choice for therapy rather than professional psychotherapists or counsellors. He believes that people of faith look for a counsellor who will honour their religious commitments and who will offer safe, effective, well-boundaried and theologically grounded help all of which can be found in the Narrative Pastoral Counselling approach.

3.3.3 Ray Galvin: Narrative therapy in pastoral ministry

Ray Galvin had more than 20 years’ experience as a minister in the Presbyterian church of New Zealand. In his pastoral practice he encountered narrative ideas and wrote a personally integrated analysis of his experience. In his unpublished online book “Narrative Therapy in Pastoral Ministry” Galvin finds both affirmative and potentially problematic aspects of narrative therapy when used in a Christian context.

Narrative therapy is a relatively new development, ... Its optimistic approach to life, its love of stories, and its deeply respectful regard for the value of persons,
give it a natural point of affinity with the Christian community. However, its intimate connection with social constructionism and the enterprise of deconstruction is potentially problematic for Christian religion. This is partly because of the moral relativism inherent in a constructionist approach, but also because deconstruction carries with it a disdain for essentialist foundations of thought such as those on which traditional Christian values and beliefs are built.  

Galvin believes that narrative therapy is far from being a threat to Christian religion but rather when adopted might “richly enhance our Christian faith and pastoral practice.” Recovering some of the forgotten knowledge within the Christian tradition and integrating it with methods of narrative therapy may result in a “uniquely Christian narrative therapy approach.” He also finds resonance in narrative therapy’s emphasis on stories, with Christianity as a “storying religion.” Galvin comments on the integration of narrative therapy and Christianity because the question is immediately raised as to how we are to synthesise or join together the Christian endeavour and narrative therapy - which of the two should have to change in order to accommodate the other? The standpoint from which I am working is that of the pastor, where the given datum is the tradition of Christian belief and practice. As Sue Patterson points out, if we (pastors) are to retain our identity as Christian, then ‘context must be assimilated to Christianity and not the reverse.’

Galvin suggests that the main obstacle for the integration of narrative therapy into Christian practice is the ‘relativism’ of social constructionism with its claims that there are no truths independent of language and linguistic activities and that people construct ‘truths’ in their conversations. Moral realities and moral notions such as ‘goodness,’ ‘heroism’ and ‘love’ are also relativised and seen as linguistic constructions created by people in conversation. The narrative therapist, says Galvin, is prevented by social constructionism from deciding for a

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93 Galvin, *Narrative Therapy*, 54.
‘better’ or ‘more good’ story in relation to the client’s problem-saturated story, but can stay ethically neutral and follow only the client’s ‘preferred’ stories.94

Galvin points out that although narrative therapists assert that they have left personal constructivism and have embraced only social constructionism they still use constructivistic essential formations in a practice of problem externalisation, unique outcomes location and re-authoring. For Galvin, this has caught narrative therapy in a bind. He argues that narrative therapy “accords well with ideas of choice, dissent, liberation, and self-determined change” yet “it cannot consistently support notions of justice, equality or compassion, as these are predicated upon foundationalist or esssentialist notions of truth.”95 He highlights that practice of narrative therapy therefore could be seriously discredited by the absence of an ontological and ethical foundation. However the major proponents of narrative therapy such as White and Epston are indeed fully committed to social justice, yet on the other hand they seem to be an exception considering the general approach and theory of narrative therapy.

Galvin indicates that the deconstructionist relativism of social construction has direct implications for Christian theology where, for example, language about God would be just another discourse that would find claims about God’s real and true existence problematic. However, when considering narrative therapy’s integration with Christian ministry Galvin sees no contradictions. “Social constructionism and deconstruction do not discredit essentialist thinking, either in ethics or ontology. Rather, they are very powerful tools for critiquing the function, role and effects of discourses of all kinds in society and culture.”96

For Galvin, a natural contact point for both narrative therapy and Christianity is found in their “love of stories” where, in a Christian context, the whole new field of a narrative theology has been developed.97 He notes a specific Christian contribution in that the pastor also has available the entire data of the Bible to make use of in helping the client move and grow toward a more satisfactory life. This includes the stories in the Bible, biblical metaphors of personal growth, the insights of psalms and

94 Where do Christian ethics become “ethically neutral?” Who is deciding it and why? Who has the “story rights” – the person, the cultural context or his or her faith authority (personal, communal, Scriptural)?
95 Galvin, Narrative Therapy, 58.
96 Galvin, Narrative Therapy, 80.
97 Galvin, Narrative Therapy, 80-81.
proverbs, theological and philosophical discussions, as well as the array of interpretive frameworks in the Bible itself and in use or used by the Church throughout its history.98

There is “a particular set of biblical landscapes” that for Galvin are proving to be “extremely helpful for the development of a pastoral narrative therapy.”99 Galvin explains the root meaning of the word sin is “to miss the mark,”100 and finds its equivalent in the word “problem” in a narrative context with the meaning of “failing to achieve what one wants and thinks one should achieve.”101 Galvin parallels the narrative concept of externalisation with the New Testament metaphor of “separation” given that “… through the work of Christ, persons have been separated from their sin, and … this separation is the basis of the healing of persons and of their relationships with humanity and God.”102 Therefore, says Galvin, a person is not only forgiven for the sin but the sin is taken from her or him and that person is now identified only with the sinless person of Jesus Christ. Galvin finds two distinct types of separation image in the New Testament: ontological – where “the person is seen as ontologically distinct and separate from his sin, whether or not any appreciable behaviour change has occurred;” and practical – where “the person is exhorted to effect a behavioural separation of himself from his sin in the actual living of his life.”103

This dis-identification with sin and identification with the person of Christ is, as Galvin points out, “a profound and radical beginning - of a lifelong journey of growth in character.”104 For Christian clients already familiar with biblical separation images, using those images in therapy, says Galvin, “can sharpen up [their] sense of separation from the problem and give the externalisation the sense of an ontological and spiritual framework.”105 In counselling, however, the word “sin” may not necessarily be used. Another term or name can be negotiated with a client and yet still be set within the context of biblical separation images. “The sin-separation model,” for Galvin, has the advantages of an externalising model, and

98 Galvin, Narrative Therapy, 81.
99 Galvin, Narrative Therapy, 81.
100 Galvin, Narrative Therapy, 82.
101 Galvin, Narrative Therapy, 83.
102 Galvin, Narrative Therapy, 84.
103 Galvin, Narrative Therapy, 84.
104 Galvin, Narrative Therapy, 88.
105 Galvin, Narrative Therapy, 89.
brings hope to a person and an aspect of personal responsibility to a client who wants to keep
the problem outside of himself or herself. The sin-separation model can also enliven and
energise the therapy process with its aspect of “moral contest” which touches “nobility,
courage, will-power, faith, and perseverance,” all biblical terms and concepts, in the person.106

These practical separation images help the client to act out the separation previously
understood on the ontological level where each Christian is separated from his or her sin.
Hebrews 12:1-2a offers a similar metaphor where a person runs a race as an athlete, cheered
on by witnesses on the stadium and where, like a runner who might have too much weight on
his shoulders, “the person is exhorted to ‘lay aside every weight and sin which clings so
closely.’”107 Galvin finds another image of separation from sin. “Repentance” in Mark 1:14-14;
suggests a “change of garment” with stripping an old self and clothing a new self in Colossians
3:1-17 (old = externalising the problem to be left, and new = identifying with a new story
formed around a unique outcome), and in Colossians 3 the old nature dies so the new person
can be “raised to life with Christ.”108 In conclusion the separation images “were designed to
help people keep their sins at bay; they are mostly vivid and strong, and are likely to have a
familiar and safe ring to the Christians whom the pastor is counselling.”109 The use of
externalisation in a pastoral setting has two main differences from its usual application in
narrative therapy. Firstly it is the pastor’s use of images and concepts that are found in
Christian tradition, especially “biblical separation images” that help to externalise the
problem, and secondly the pastor’s operating space “within a Christian moral framework of
values and ethics.”110

Galvin also discusses death, grief and loss, as a pastor’s constant reality. Like White and
Epston, he is “interested in the way people’s memory of the deceased survives not merely as
a fixed, static picture, but as a living narrative which seems to have an ongoing personality”
that continues to exist not as a “metaphysical entity” but rather as “a ‘presence’ which exists

106 Galvin, Narrative Therapy, 90.
107 Galvin, Narrative Therapy, 90.
108 Galvin, Narrative Therapy, 90-92.
109 Galvin, Narrative Therapy, 93.
110 Galvin, Narrative Therapy, 104.
in the storying of the mourners.”

The Christian creed incorporates the memory of “the communion of saints.” Therefore, says Galvin “the Christian community is ‘inhabited’ by the personalities of those who have gone before.”

Galvin finds the best expression of this awareness of the living communion of saints in the sacrament of communion and the living memory of Jesus in that act. Based on this Galvin developed “a Christian narrative view of death, based on the metaphor of separation.”

Death is the separation of the body from the soul and the personality. When we are alive, these three aspects of ourselves are fully melded together. When we die they go their separate ways. The body goes to the earth. The soul (the centre of consciousness) goes to be with God. But the personality remains socially distributed in the storying of those in the community to which we belonged, and is especially present with those who knew us best. The pastor can minister to people on each of these three levels.

What induces grief and loss, says Galvin, is actually the departure of the body, while the departure of the soul is meaningful and a source of comfort, and where also a third area exists, “the survival of the socially distributed personality of the deceased in the storying of the bereaved is yet another area of human experience of bereavement.”

Galvin also finds a narrative approach to be very beneficial in pastoring the elderly and terminally ill. He notes that “reminiscing” is an important stage of late life. It can be used together with a narrative therapy aspect of re-storying as a process of valuing memories and significant events of the past through the re-storying of a person's life in line with a preferred reality told through reminiscing. With people of faith Galvin “seeks to help the person recreate their life according to their best and most preferred Christian values.”

Reminiscence has a whole-of-life value, not necessarily related to problems, and pastors can use all pastoral encounters to stimulate reminiscence.

Whenever a narrative therapist helps a client identify unique outcomes from the client’s past, a process of reminiscing has begun. ... It would seem healthy and re-creative for anybody, at any stage of life, to spend time examining their past, recalling the special moments that are indicative of strength and nobility,
filling out the landscape of consciousness and of meaning in relation to these, and drawing these meanings into the person's ever-developing story. ... Christian narrative reminiscing can have the added dimension of recalling special moments which the person would identify as ‘the hand of God’ on their life.¹¹⁷

Galvin notes that the word “depression” doesn’t exist in the Bible and following de Shazer, replaces the word “depression” with “the blues,”¹¹⁸ a term also pointing to how Jesus “set people free from oppression”¹¹⁹ rather than healing them from depression. Galvin also addresses training in narrative pastoral counselling and supports an eclectic approach.

Hence, those who counsel in a narrative mode ... are also bringing to their counselling all their previous learnings and skills in the counselling field. This point is essential for thinking about future training in narrative therapy. If we are to train people as narrative therapists or narrative pastors - especially those who have never counselled before - we need to be cognisant of the full range of skills and issues in which they need to be conversant.¹²⁰

Galvin suggests that Christian narrative counsellors should also learn from the following approaches which seem to share some ground or fit well with a narrative approach: Rogers’ person-centred approach, cognitive therapy, family therapy, and solution-focused therapy.¹²¹ Galvin suggests that because of its understanding of cultural influences on people’s lives, training should include anthropological knowledge about the social use of metaphorical language. This is helpful for understanding the cultural context as it appears in the Bible and which can still enrich alternative ways of seeing life in our own culture today.¹²² For Galvin narrative trainees should be able “to grasp the postmodernist core of narrative therapy, both conceptually and in their practice,” and suggests adopting for that purpose a proposed course of training exercises from Wally McKenzie and Gerald Monk in their book “Narrative therapy in practice: The archaeology of hope.”¹²³ Furthermore, John Neal’s training methods on “the practices of power” in counselling relationships are also encouraged as part of the training.¹²⁴

Galvin summarises the important elements for training. Potential students

¹¹⁷ Galvin, Narrative Therapy, 137.
¹¹⁸ Galvin, Narrative Therapy, 144.
¹¹⁹ Galvin, Narrative Therapy, 149.
¹²⁰ Galvin, Narrative Therapy, 175-176.
¹²¹ Galvin, Narrative Therapy, 176-181.
¹²² Galvin, Narrative Therapy, 183-184.
¹²³ Galvin, Narrative Therapy, 184.
¹²⁴ Galvin, Narrative Therapy, 184-185.
... need a good understanding of the intellectual concepts of essentialism, constructivism, deconstruction and the basic concepts of the Cartesian world view (rationalism, empiricism, the subject-object dichotomy, foundationalism, etc.) which deconstruction is in revolt against. They also need an overall ‘meta-perspective’ for assessing for themselves what they think is the proper relationship between and priority of these concepts.\textsuperscript{125}

Galvin also emphasises the “unshakeable belief in the nobility, value and goodness of the client” as an essential quality of a pastoral narrative counsellor and important counterbalance to externalising and consequently rejecting the unworthy and unwelcomed parts of life that are going to be re-authored.\textsuperscript{126} It is also the way for a narrative therapist to “radiate” hope and optimism for the client and which makes the cure of the person possible.\textsuperscript{127} In a Christian setting Christian pastors are “already called to love persons and to believe and hope for the very best for them,” to believe they are made whole in Christ, separated from sin and utterly loved by God. This belief therefore also has to become transparent in the therapy space.\textsuperscript{128}

The following section reviews what, in my opinion, is one of the key foundational texts that consistently and authentically (with due respect to practice) integrates aspects of narrative practices and Christian faith in general. \textit{Interweavings} is the only book besides Dinkins \textit{Narrative pastoral counselling} that I encountered before my PhD research. \textit{Interweavings} had a significant influence on me although the way I understand the key themes changed greatly as my PhD research journey unfolded. For the purposes of this literature review I have placed the \textit{Interweavings} review between ‘contemporary findings’ and ‘practical applications’ on the one side, and ‘conservative interpretation’ and ‘cultural examples’ on the other. \textit{Interweavings} presents as a bridge between all these areas and yet also touches each one.

3.4 Research and explorations: \textit{Interweavings} - Conversations between narrative therapy and Christian faith

\textit{Interweavings} is a collection of papers edited by Richard Cook and Irene Alexander. It accurately represents many interrelated aspects of narrative therapy and Christian faith.

\textsuperscript{125} Galvin, \textit{Narrative Therapy}, 185.
\textsuperscript{126} Galvin, \textit{Narrative Therapy}, 186.
\textsuperscript{127} Galvin, \textit{Narrative Therapy}, 186. Galvin leans on O’Hanlon’s point.
\textsuperscript{128} Galvin, \textit{Narrative Therapy}, 186.
Contributors and writers in this work are self-described as “Christian practitioners,” counsellors, pastors, social workers and academic, who have wrestled and struggled for years with narrative ideas and their relation to Christian faith. This review will consider some of these ideas and follow the order of articles in the book itself. Therefore some authors will appear repeatedly, yet they will also be presented separately according to the sequencing of the article.

3.4.1 Cook and Alexander: Introductory notes

Alexander suggests that through learning narrative therapy we seek to follow Jesus’ critique of the dominant structures of his time, especially the religious ones. It is also the way “to be true to the reality of what brings Life.” She recognises narrative ideas in Christian perspectives that motivate one to take “a fresh look” at gospel stories and personal faith. Narrative therapy provides a respectful space and manner in which to work with painful stories. She is aware of narrative therapy’s emphasis that our dominant beliefs direct our lives, identifying as a Christian, with the choice to separate the problem from the person, one of the marking stones of the narrative approach, because it values the person as made in the image of God.

One of the most significant points that distinguish secular and Christian perspectives is the view about truth and absolutes. A narrative approach might be seen at first as advocating relativism that questions absolute Truth yet, in effect it serves to question what we have absolutised and relativised and offers us tools for a more accurate knowing of ourselves and our knowledge. The author describes her own research into the ways of knowing about a worldview of absolute Truth. When comparing high school students attending Christian schools and those from state schools, survey results showed a statistically significant difference between these two groups in their beliefs about truth. The majority of students accept what they hear from authorities as ‘received knowledge.’ Maturing challenges us to evaluate truth claims from our earlier years. She found that some people simply choose to stay with the truths they have adopted. Others lean more toward procedural knowledge and

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seek a more scientific and evidence-based examination. Others turn to intuitive or subjective knowledge and rely on personal experience.

However, a fourth way moves away from received knowledge, what Mary Belenky calls ‘connected knowing,’ where we listen to the stories of others and are able to share their truths and knowledge by experiencing it from the inside, and thus connecting with them. Results of the research influenced Alexander to view differently her own Christian culture realising that much of what she previously considered Christian was actually cultural. While some Christians find the narrative critique of culture disturbing, Alexander finds a parallel in narrative questioning of cultural practices in Jesus’ call for Christians to be in this world but not of it, because such questioning is intended to find another way of being and another kingdom. Secondly, missionary experience taught Alexander to value other cultures inside their own experiences, either cultural or about the Divine. Thirdly, in looking for the story of joy and inner satisfaction Alexander finds parallels with a narrative inquiry of alternative story that also offers a way of coming out from an “often pathologising process of diagnosing and treatment of ‘mental illness’.” Fourthly, reading and research made the author aware of various ways of knowing, that knowledge of God is not black and white, not only static and not just received from authorities. Alexander finds that being a person of faith is more about relationship with God than about “right doctrines.” Finally, Alexander emphasises how a shared personal experience does not imply her agreement with everything postmodern, rather she emphasises how disputes are more cultural than Christian versus postmodern.

### 3.4.2 Richard Cook

For Cook, constructing identity is a developmental stage of character, effected by using language and experience. Language comes from the social world where characters live and God’s ideas come to us through language as. Three factors helped him to embrace a narrative approach: Jacques Derrida’s emphasis on the importance of context and location which influences the interpretation of our experiences; Michel Foucault’s writing on the power of knowledge and even more about power positions in society that prescribe what is the truth;

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Jean-Francois Lyotard’s scepticism toward metanarratives or grand stories.\textsuperscript{132} Cook perceived from this that the self is not autonomous but is a product of history and culture, and the construction of that self is achieved through social matrix and the relationships within it. Cook values narrative therapy’s stand for an influential and curious but non-expert and decentring position of the therapist, for seeing the problem as the problem and not the person, for narrative assistance to growth through restorying, for listening for sparkling moments, exceptions and news of difference, for the idea of remembering where people can re-attach to forgotten experiences and significant people from their lives, for using letters, certificates and awards in a narrative way that helps people solidify their alternative identity.

I saw this as akin to our call to be the people of God who provide shelter for the wanderer (Is 58:7), who with genuine curiosity take up a stance respectful of the person (1 Peter 2:17), of humility (Phil 2:3; Is 38:9-20; Col 3:12-15) and who are quietened by the compassion and comfort of God toward us (2 Cor 1:3).\textsuperscript{133}

Cook explains that the purpose of his article is to show how Jesus liberated people by offering an alternative story and that we are agents of liberation as well when utilising narrative processes. He advocates for three forms of liberation in Christian theology: spiritual liberation – as independence from dominating self-centredness, birthing into a new reality, and connecting with the transcendent and eternal Kingdom of God; personal liberation – as gradual transformation from inside out whereby previously learned social and family life-limiting patterns are resisted and replaced with new ideas and practices; social world liberation – as struggling for social justice and engaging in the construction of alternative communities and ways of being by fighting against injustice, inequality, oppression and cruelty, and for justice, equality, kindness, respect and freedom.\textsuperscript{134} For Cook, liberation in narrative therapy is found in the gradual resistance to prescriptive ideas seen in micro moments of time that lead to alternative inspiring ideas for preferred thoughts and actions.

Jesus confronted and resisted the prevailing religious narrative of his time, Cook points out, and “articulated alternative ideas and practices of freedom, connectedness, equality, respect

\textsuperscript{132} “Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives.” (Italic Lyotard).

\textsuperscript{133} Cook and Alexander, Interweavings, 19.

\textsuperscript{134} Richard Cook, “Liberation from conforming social patterns: the possibilities of Narrative Therapy to aid the exploration of Christian spiritualities,” in Cook and Alexander, Interweavings, 40-51.
and genuineness.” Jesus, in Foucault’s terms, proposed a “return of knowledge” by declaring an alternative narrative of repentance as change, of knowing that “happens when one’s inner life becomes connected to God and this overflows in the fruit of a fully experienced and liberated life.” This illustrates the similarity between Jesus’ ways and the way of a narrative process where in both cases there exists the resistance to the dominant narrative. Cook views narrative therapy as a way of exploring Christian spirituality that can help clients identify and resist social forces that make them conform, and liberate themselves from limiting expectations from within themselves or from social, family or church context. The freedom achieved offers alternative views of Jesus and Christian spirituality, “one of our connectedness to Love, a new knowing of fatherly acceptance and a collaboration with divine mercy.”

Cook records some of the learning students reported from a narrative therapy unit, mainly in their ideas about counselling: a developed “significant awareness” about the “dynamics of power” in their counselling but also their personal relationships; noticing “a growing appreciation of the power of words and their meanings;” a lessening of their expert role and “all-knowing stance” as a counsellor; feeling “more relaxed ... less assertive ... and more free to be themselves;” recognising themselves as fellow travellers; feeling like they were “learning a new language and growing into a new way of thinking;” developing a view of a different way of living, relating and seeing people; feeling like they were “being thrown into a new culture;” learning not only a new way of seeing their clients but also “a new way of viewing the world and a new way of thinking about themselves;” reporting a growing “ability to consider the individual in the larger context of their lives;” adopting “the stance of curiosity, questioning for more detail in the smaller, average, day to day words;” increasing respect for clients by avoiding a clinical, restricting and judging approach and therefore empowering clients. This changed the focus in listening to client’s stories – not

135 Cook, Liberation, 50.
136 Cook, The effects, 166.
137 Cook, The effects, 166.
138 Cook, The effects, 166.
139 Cook, The effects, 166.
140 Cook, The effects, 167.
141 Cook, The effects, 167.
142 Cook, The effects, 167.
143 Cook, The effects, 167.
144 Cook, The effects, 167.
focusing on what is wrong with the person and searching for their deficits but rather leaving the client “intact, ... not pathologised and with greater levels of hope;” growing in confidence with an expanded counselling skills repertoire and feeling they were “getting richer, with more tools in the toolbox;” “fascinated with ideas;” choosing to go against “binaries to a gambit of shades;” and became “able to see themselves as real counsellors for the first time, of being challenged, stretched, excited and hopeful of things to come.”

Concerning the effects on the students’ ideas about their faith, Cook reports that postmodern philosophy was a challenge for a significant number of students. Student experiences included: dissonance between Biblical language or emphasis and narrative ideas (e.g. the Bible using deficit expressions when talking about a person rather than the feature of laziness) thus making it hard to externalise the problem when applying a narrative approach; a “new-found freedom to reconsider absolutes in their belief system and to examine them” didn’t undermine their faith but opened up new potential where nothing is wrong with the principles but it’s helpful to understand how we arrive at them and why we choose to hold onto them; a black and white view was softened “amidst a sea of shades of grey;” diminished judgement of others’ views; finding parallels with Jesus’ respectful, non-judgmental and built-on-faith way of relating and using a “strength-focused perspective;” valuing and simultaneously separating people from their problems as Jesus did, thus leading to the “non-pathologising stance” of a narrative therapist; “experiencing a greater sense of agency associated with their own spirituality” regarding the aspects of personified views of evil, of biblical ideas of freedom around a sense of growing and challenging binaries; and a “sense of growth in an interdependent relationship with God.” Cook concludes that the study confirmed that narrative therapy has the potential to advance the work of God in the lives of

145 Cook, The effects, 170.
146 Cook, The effects, 170.
147 Cook, The effects, 170.
148 Cook, The effects, 170.
149 Cook, The effects, 170.
150 Cook, The effects, 171.
151 Cook, The effects, 171.
152 Cook, The effects, 172.
153 Cook, The effects, 172.
154 Cook, The effects, 172-173.
155 Cook, The effects, 174.
both counsellors and clients and to be “a useful tool for the Christian and wider community to experience the transformative power of God.”  

In summary, Cook found that narrative ideas and practices offered a number of options for using deconstruction of dominant social ideas and practices and the re-storying of life guided by scripture. They maintain the Narrative stance of curiosity rather than judgement, and of description rather than prescription. They offer inclusivity where people’s own journeys, values and differences of perspective and choice can be welcomed. ... they promote a shared leadership with attention to the dynamics of power and positioning and make space for creativity. They have the potential to lead to social involvement in just and transformative ways...

3.4.3 Richard Cook, with Su Fenwick and Michelle Youngs

Cook, Fenwick and Youngs present highlights of an interview that Cook conducted with Fenwick and Youngs as narrative practitioners working with children and young people. Three ideas emerged on what facilitates change when working with children: providing children in counselling with a new experience of themselves within a counselling relationship; the paramount importance of ‘bearing witness’ to children’s experience and the meaning they assign to it; knowing that if the child’s context cannot be changed, the relationship to it can.

Fenwick emphasises the core of connection as crucial when working with children, because the language apparatus is still not developed to the level of the adult person as a primary way of communication. Fenwick describes this element of her work of counselling with all people, but children in particular, as a rope with three cords. One cord is the knowledge we have from learning. The second is the cord of experience – both life and professional experience. These two chords get inter-twined in the work. But I believe there’s a third cord which comes from the heart. It’s the heart and spiritual connection – love, empathy and respect. It’s the twining of that rope that forms the connection with another person. I see it as a hollow rope and in the middle of the rope there’s a flowing, an actual vibrancy of connection.

156 Cook, *The effects*, 175.
159 Cook et al, *Christians*, 178.
Matthew 18:10\textsuperscript{162} transformed Fenwick’s view and way of working with children, seeing them through God’s eyes as a gift and as ones who need help for their voice to be heard. Youngs highlights the importance of the influence and power of the children’s life context as an aspect that makes work with children very different than with adults.\textsuperscript{163} In order to achieve long term change in children’s lives the work with adults in their environment is necessary. Youngs also sees that a child changes at the level of identity rather than on the level of behaviour.

As Fenwick notes, narrative therapists will therefore build “an audience to the development”\textsuperscript{164} that might include parents or other close and trusted persons for the child. The therapist will be especially sensitive to the power dynamic, using a collaborative approach as a two way process to avoid the counsellor’s expert role. In the end such an approach also allows more space for the movement of God.\textsuperscript{165} In narrative work with children Christian therapists will listen for the moments of God’s light in a child’s life as “moments of alternative identity experience, where they are a little freer of the burden and where there’s some alternative action.”\textsuperscript{166} During that process Christian narrative practitioners are inspired by hope to plant seeds of possibility in children and trust “the Gardener to help them grow.”\textsuperscript{167}

3.4.4 Irene Alexander\textsuperscript{168}

Irene Alexander suggests that in learning narrative therapy we follow Jesus who critiqued the dominant discourses of his time and thus we are true to the reality of life. Jesus challenged religious and power practices, teaching his disciples to avoid taking positions of power and live in permanent servanthood. Exploration of positions of power, even between counsellor and counsellee, and the intention of serving the counsellee is the focus of the Christian narrative practitioner as well. A person’s understanding of power influences his or her

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{162} “Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones; for, I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven.” (NRSV)
\textsuperscript{163} Fenwick: “You can’t divorce the child from their family and the wider context.” Cook et al, Christians, 183.
\textsuperscript{164} Cook at al, Christians, 189.
\textsuperscript{165} Cook at al, Christians, 189.
\textsuperscript{166} Cook at al, Christians, 193.
\textsuperscript{167} Cook at al, Christians, 193.
\end{footnotesize}
relationships and choices, and narrative therapy explores and unmasks the ways of people involved in producing and negotiating power and knowledge in the context of family, communities, institutions and society. Traditionally power is understood more in relation to ‘possession of an entity’ than about the quality of relationships therefore the person at the hierarchical top will possess power and will exercise power-over those who are lower. They will have ‘more’ power in relation to those under them, who have ‘less’ power or are ‘powerless.’ Jesus didn’t directly teach about power but rather taught by demonstrating his way of living in his relationships revealing that power increases when shared. He intentionally hands power to those around him, testifying that being a servant is the greatest power of all. Great leadership is found in servanthood. Therefore, Jesus testifies not about unilateral but “collaborative use of power: which empowers persons to make their own choices. The God in Jesus’ example is a God of invitation, of relationship, rather than a God of power over.”

Alexander notes Michael White’s contrast of the concepts and use of traditional and modern power. Modern power is based on “people’s own thinking,” personal evaluation about life and use of “normalising judgements” in accordance with the norms and imperatives of their culture and context. Traditional power is “enforced from outside” while “modern power depends more on individuals controlling themselves and their peers by constant normalising evaluation,” a comparison presented in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional power</th>
<th>Modern power</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focuses on institutional morality</td>
<td>Focuses on norms and performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centralised</td>
<td>Pervasive, but subject to culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Top-down</td>
<td>Monitored by the individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enforced from without</td>
<td>Enforced by the individual on the self and others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highly visible</td>
<td>Implicit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Those who do not conform are punished or excluded</td>
<td>Everyone feels themselves under public scrutiny</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table LR1. Traditional and modern power

Modern power subtly influences television, film, magazines and culture in general. Christians too are in Michael White’s words “unwitting instruments” of social control, even if calling on Biblical absolutes which also have different interpretations within various denominations or

169 Alexander, Power, 76.
170 Alexander, Power, 76.
cultural contexts. Power also influences the concepts of morality and personal failure that are created and exist within politics and local culture. Being aware of that influence, narrative therapy takes a ‘de-centred’ and influential approach, de-centred in handing the authority of the therapist to the consulted person and influential in relinquishing the expert position in favour of common collaborative inquiry. Narrative approaches challenge Christians to re-examine their conceptualisations and practices of power in the Truth and Right beliefs they impose to others. Alexander suggests that learning to let go of performance and evaluation, to be poor in spirit, to grip God for survival, to fall into the arms of the Divine Mystery, bring a whole different conceptualisation of ‘ethical work’ – of God’s expectations of my ways of being. It points instead to a way of being that is relational, accepting of weakness and failure, being vulnerable to others, and thus releasing them to be vulnerable, weak, and ‘in-process.’

This approach moves from ‘power-over’ toward ‘power-to,’ creating the power that transforms by allowing persons to have their own choices and the authority to give power over them to chosen others. In Matthew 7:28-29, Jesus’ kind of power comes from within. His implicit authority comes “from an inner integrity rather than from positions, resources or expertise” and challenges us to our own transformation, to share power also in a therapeutic “co-authoring” relationship and in relationship with God: “Thus the sharing of power in co-authoring gives authority to the other, the person who is exploring and developing their own sense of themselves. This, I see, is how God co-authors with us.”

Alexander perceives narrative therapy not as another cognitive therapy but as a holistic process that through focusing on emotions identifies not only a person’s values but also their spirituality. Alexander presumes “the Narrative process of unearthing the alternate story” to be “a very Biblical transformation process” where the therapist offers a “hope-filled” and “faith-filled” process. The “Greatest Story” is also an alternate story, points out Alexander, and even God is “the God of the Alternate Story,” prompting the counsellor to look for “the

171 Alexander, Power, 84.
172 Alexander, Power, 89.
174 Alexander, Narrative, 114.
175 Alexander, Narrative, 116.
176 Alexander, Narrative, 117.
fingerprints of God” in a more or less obvious way in a person’s story. Alexander warns counsellors to resist a too rapid attribution of all the events to God, which disempowers people from their own freedom and responsibility of choice. Therefore, Alexander views it more broadly as a “stance of faith that looks for the positive.”177

In practice, a Christian narrative therapist will hear the pain and negatives from the story and simultaneously hold onto hope and trust in God’s presence and transformative power, searching for the person’s own experience of these aspects in his or her individual story “knowing that nothing is ever beyond hope, no person beyond redemption.”178 Alexander sees Jesus as “the master of the alternate perspective”179 constantly questioning the usual ways we see things and pointing rather to the heart than to the norm. Likewise, says Alexander, narrative therapy helps Christians “to step outside the box of legalistic demands”180 that are aimed at a person and to reject imposed comparisons and self-checking with local and temporal cultural norms. Alexander concludes that the

> Narrative process hears the person’s own story, aware of the places of suffering as indicators of values which have been overturned or not heard, seeking through these points the alternate story, the story of life, value, health and agency. It provides a means to companion this seeking of Reality, to highlight the choices for Life, and to honour the journey of each individual.181

### 3.4.5 Irene Alexander with John Silver and Jo-anne Brown

Irene Alexander interviewed two Christian ministers and practitioners of narrative approaches.182 They state that being a Christian is about joining our stories with the narrative of God and that narrative therapy techniques help people to deconstruct and re-story their identities “in accordance with their understanding of their relationship with Jesus Christ.”183 Christianity is not just about acceptance of “propositional truths.” The person is invited to

177 Alexander, *Narrative*, 118.
178 Alexander, *Narrative*, 118.
179 Alexander, *Narrative*, 121.
180 Alexander, *Narrative*, 120.
enter into a “reciprocal relationship” with the person of God in order to live the truths out in that relationship, reflecting the Hebrew world where “to know something is to live it out.”

3.4.6 Lex McMillan

Practicing narrative therapy invited McMillan to deconstruct his own basic assumptions about the nature of the self and God. He found that narrative ideas contributed to his seeing and decision-making ability concerning constructions of power that follow his relationships with God, himself, others and the earth. In 2002 McMillan researched the challenges Christian narrative therapists encounter when applying narrative therapy. Six participants from the New Zealand counselling community reported six common integrative challenges.

(1) “The way Narrative Therapy appears to challenge the existence of essential truth, including the existence of God.” Our immersion in the Bible as the non-negotiable and canonical foundation of faith might be a helpful bridge here.

(2) “The social constructionist denial that people have a structural or essential-self.” McMillan adopts in response a “both-and,” approach where persons are both structural and relational.

(3) “The concern that deconstructive questioning might dismantle a person’s faith in God.” The question arises for Christians about what or what not to deconstruct because with “non-selective deconstruction” liberation leads to disorientation, and awareness of our part in social construction of reality leads toward personal vulnerability. However, deconstruction might also help to remove “oppressive versions of identity,” potentially clear the ground for doing justice for the marginal, and help liberate the excluded and oppressed. To achieve that goal, careful questioning that asks “not too much too soon” is required.

(4) “Narrative Therapy appears to promote relativism.” Postmodernism, says McMillan, does not necessarily question essential truths and values but claims that because our meaning making is constructed by language and guided by discourses it is never an accurate reflection of the things talked about. McMillan points out that “to confuse Narrative Therapy with relativism is to overlook its gift” which is to help a person recognise the meaning-making

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186 Term used by Middleton and Walsh. See McMillan, Stories, 31.
process where it is more about “how we know what we know” than about questioning the existence of the things themselves.

(5) The “assumption that God has one right path for people to follow in their life” where applying narrative therapy, when developing and supporting personal agency and personal choice, might be seen as encouraging independence and undermining the authority of God. In fact, one thing that narrative therapy offers to people is “freedom to be pilgrims in their own lives” and explore themselves and God, making persons in both aspects richer and more spiritually present to the world and to God.

(6) “Narrative Therapy’s ability to challenge established structures of power within the organised religion of Christianity.” However, as McMillan points out, it is more related to “organised religion’s aversion to challenge,” and narrative therapy is indeed “exceptionally good at deconstructing and disturbing versions of Christianity that keep people constrained by minute law-keeping.” On the other hand, narrative therapy, in a manner similar to that of Jesus, helps deconstruct and reconstruct a person’s relationship with God where, within such circumstances, it might also serve as a “life-giving gift.”

3.4.7 Nicola Hoggard Creegan

Creegan reports her growing conviction that narrative therapy is of “enormous interest for spiritual and psychological well-being.” She focuses on the relationship between a narrative therapy and freedom where the use of “externalization” enables persons to separate themselves from “oppressing voices” and resist the circumstances and cultural conditioning that produce their problems. Another element of freedom is what David Epston names “co-research” where both therapist and client inquire into how cultural conditioning affects the person, and how to achieve freedom and power. Creegan points here to “the theology of conditioned freedom” because in order to be free and healed people must take responsibility, with assistance, for their life context. Creegan is referring to Pembroke’s Trinitarian interpretation of narrative therapy as support for her claim that freedom comes through community which is also the image of God in us. Creegan considers the question of how narrative therapy, based on “very constructionist” and postmodern metaphysics, relates to

187 Used for pre-reading for interviewees in this PhD research.
Christian faith. She embraces Van Huyssteen’s method of “transversal dialogue,” explaining it as “the kind of discourse between disciplines that lays one against the other, but that does not attempt to reduce one side to the other.” This method integrates insights from theology and any other scientific and social discipline, looking for resonances that deepen the understanding between them.

It is an ongoing tension within the permanent dialogue of transversality, causing more “imaginative leaps” and opening ever new continuing questions. Part of the tension is to understand the identity and the nature of externalized voices. Narrative therapists, says Creegan, actually do not believe in the reality of externalized voices but see them rather as “internalised values, concerns and obsessions of the larger society.” In practical application, however, narrative therapists treat them as very real. Creegan at a deeper level resists the constructionist approach, although respecting the influence of circumstances, cultural context and our significant family, but also highlights the notable influence of biological and genetic inputs into the voices that construct our stories. She finds that narrative therapy “fits the language of temptation” which is a biblical language too, and that temptations people face, besides being constructs of reality, also have a real spiritual power. However, life is a choice, points out Creegan, and people either resist temptations and choose life or acquiescence to these powers. She finds narrative therapy very effective in exploiting the natural expansiveness of human minds and uses Pannenberg’s term “exocentricity” to describe it. Exocentricity describes humans as always open beyond experience, any given situation, the world itself, or even cultural constructions by constantly replacing cultural forms and by transforming nature into culture. Narrative therapy, in Creegan’s concluding analysis, relates to spirituality as freedom, healing and community. It supports resisting oppressive voices, as theology advocates as well, and brings freedom in discovering and creating new narratives and metaphors; such freedom being a common indication of both spirituality and mental health. Further, narrative therapy, says Creegan, “attempts to heal with dignity, freedom, empowerment and with social connection in mind.” Finally, healing in narrative therapy should always happen within the “corporate presence of others” who will verbally support the resistance of oppression and help in revealing “previous moments of strength and discernment.” Thus the spirituality of narrative therapy “is life-giving, and an important contribution to being free in community. Churches would do well not only to adopt this as a
method of counselling, but to adopt its insights and practices more generally in the life of the church and liturgy.\textsuperscript{189}

3.4.8 John Meteyard

Meteyard invites us to a thoughtful conversation between narrative therapy and narrative theology.\textsuperscript{190} He presents George Lindbeck’s “cultural-linguistic” model where Christian doctrines are not “first-order-truth-claims” but rather “rules for life” of certain communities where those rules arise from their unique encounter with the stories of Scripture. Citing Lindbeck’s colleague Hans Frei, Meteyard indicates that theology in the last two hundred years has interpreted the biblical story from the world’s perspective within the frame of its own time and understanding, rather than attempting to “take seriously the deeper purposes of the biblical story as it is written.”\textsuperscript{191} Frei, according to Meteyard, advocates that we have to encounter the Bible narrative in such a way that “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.”\textsuperscript{192} Building on Frei, Meteyard reminds us that the Scripture is written for the purpose of personal and corporate transformation and focuses on “four specific points of potential interaction” between narrative theology and narrative therapy.

Firstly, the central goal of the story is to understand and work with people. The story is central both for understanding God and the person. When narrative therapy puts stories in its practical focus it actually restores, deepens and acknowledges the importance of personal, group and cultural narratives that daily influence and form people’s lives.\textsuperscript{193}

Secondly he acknowledges the importance of narratives in constructing human identity. Meteyard suggests three implications. Narrative theology claims that God prefers a narrative way when revealing Himself to us, thus narrative is also important for the construction and formation of human identity at both individual and communal level; Narrative theology recognises the importance of community in forming personal identity, as does a narrative approach, when using practices such as co-authoring, re-membering, reflective witnesses.

\textsuperscript{189} Creegan, \textit{Narrative}, 66. All quotes above.
\textsuperscript{191} Meteyard, \textit{Narrative}, 95.
\textsuperscript{192} Meteyard, \textit{Narrative}, 96.
\textsuperscript{193} Meteyard, \textit{Narrative}, 97-99.
teams, or therapeutic letters; Church community based in the biblical narrative helps powerfully with establishing and thickening the preferred, and also Christian, identities of a faith community’s individual members.\textsuperscript{194}

Thirdly he affirms the importance of narratives in human ethics and personal morality, noting that Christians sometimes critique narrative approaches as relativistic concerning values. Critics may say that anything goes in a narrative approach but Meteyard points out that, in fact, the opposite is true, while narrative therapists strongly support marginalised individual or group stories against the dominant social and cultural metanarratives. Narrative therapy therefore also supports personal ethical choices within the context of values of faith communities. It “expands our understanding,” says Meteyard, “of the many different ways that we may live while remaining true to our story as Christians.”\textsuperscript{195}

Fourthly the narratives of the Bible are used in counselling. Meteyard highlights that narrative therapy even contributes to biblical approaches to counselling because it values the Scripture in practice without imposing it on clients. He mentions here Ruffing’s spiritual director approach of inviting clients to “stand under the story” of the Bible and explore the significance and impact of the chosen story for the person.\textsuperscript{196}

\textbf{3.4.9 James Arkwright}

Arkwright builds on Cuchman’s critique of the helping professions and modern psychotherapy, stating that their construct of the self is expressed in deficit terms.\textsuperscript{197} “Whilst all DSM IV diagnoses create a deficit, symptomatic and no-socially contexted account of the self, the personality disorders are arguably the most reductionist and pathologising of individuals.”\textsuperscript{198} In response, quoting François Fénelon, Arkwright pleads for a listening with an “open mind”\textsuperscript{199} to avoid a Western “comparison ethic”\textsuperscript{200} contained in pursuit of the perfect

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{194} Meteyard, \textit{Narrative}, 100-101.  \\
\textsuperscript{195} Meteyard, \textit{Narrative}, 101-103.  \\
\textsuperscript{196} Meteyard, \textit{Narrative}, 104.  \\
\textsuperscript{197} James Arkwright, “Thinking beyond deficit positioning of self: Relevance for practice and faith,” in Cook and Alexander, \textit{Interweavings}, 126-142.  \\
\textsuperscript{198} Arkwright, \textit{Thinking}, 127.  \\
\textsuperscript{199} Arkwright, \textit{Thinking}, 129.  \\
\textsuperscript{200} Arkwright, \textit{Thinking}, 130.
\end{flushleft}
life and perfect self. Such a view suggests that a healthier self would be a person with less deficits than others. With this in mind Arkwright calls for “deconstructing binary language descriptors” by no longer seeing people as either well or ill for this is “an inherently political move because the either/or construction only serves the interest of those people who take up the privileged position within the binary. Moreover, the use of language that creates this mechanism of advantage is rarely negotiated or deconstructed.”

Therefore, the use of language is crucial for re-constructing the self from “the experience of limitation” and its deficit-defined constructs toward the inquiry of experience and creation of multiple descriptions of the self’s competencies. This approach also aims to practice noticing and searching for what is said or what is not being said, using a “relational language-making” to explore experiences of limitation, competencies (and what has been said or not), rather than the conventional language used in binary either/or categories. The use of relational language seeks to develop multiple language descriptions and explore new positions of the person in relation to the problem so that the person can “experience being less positioned in deficit and have an increased sense of agency in his life.”

Arkwright’s conclusion highlights how Jesus re-positions people from their deficit position or story by accepting them as they are, and by finding another description for their life and situation. In many cases that will also often undermine the position of the privileged and powerful in society in their relation to the oppressed and discriminated individual. When narrative practice uses a relational language and searches for multiple rather than singular and binary descriptions, this “resonates with and can give witness to the life of Christ.”

3.4.10 Donald McMenamin

McMenamin discusses a common view of identity as “the essential self within a person.” He defines the Self “as being a self-in-relationship-with-God”; this relationship is imagined

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201 Arkwright, Thinking, 131.
202 Arkwright, Thinking, 136.
203 Arkwright, Thinking, 136.
204 Arkwright, Thinking, 141.
205 Donald McMenamin, “The Self God knows and the socially constructed identity,” in Cook and Alexander, Interweavings, 143-162.
206 McMenamin, The Self, 143.
as playful and joyful, a relationship often distant in everyday life and moreover, “[m]y ‘Identity’ differs from my God-known Self in that my Identity is the result of the everyday conclusion I arrive at when I think about who I am.” McMenamin recognises a constant struggle between these everyday conclusions about his identity and his God-known Self. He claims that a narrative therapy offers a useful tool for remembering our Self-in-relationship-with-God nature, by providing us with practices to explore, remember and make choices about how to describe our Self that, consequently, make us more the authors of our identity.

He strongly argues that the meaning given to words, actions and events gets decided through a political process that reflects the power relations within a particular culture. That political process of “arriving at meanings and agreeing to them” produces a “competition for meaning-making” about certain experiences and events whereby at the end some of them become proclaimed as dominant and appear to be “self-evidently true.” Such socially agreed ‘true’ and self-evidently ‘right’ meaning is called “discourse” in a narrative therapy. There is a possibility, says McMenamin, that through such a socio-political process people’s identity becomes a “product of a taken-for-granted process, rather than a result of carefully chosen, experience-near consideration.” This would support the postmodern assertion about identity as a social construction. If so, points out McMenamin, a narrative therapy with its careful exploration of the meaning-making process serves well for the purpose of removing political and social layers in order to recognise the God-known Self of the person. To support clearer personal choices about one’s identity and support better understanding of one’s God-known Self a narrative therapy for McMenamin uses conversational maps, re-authoring conversations, re-membering conversations and outsider witness practices.

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208 McMenamin, The Self, 146.
209 McMenamin, The Self, 147.
210 McMenamin, The Self, 147.
211 McMenamin, The Self, 148.
212 McMenamin, The Self, 149.
213 McMenamin, The Self, 152.
214 McMenamin, The Self, 155.
215 McMenamin, The Self, 158.
3.5 Conservative theological interpretation: The relationship between narrative theology and narrative therapy

3.5.1 Robert Piehl: Narrative theology and narrative therapy

Robert Piehl offers a unique critique of narrative practices from a more conservative theological perspective. He focuses on various aspects of firstly, narrative theology, and secondly on narrative therapy. In his unpublished PhD thesis, evangelical theologian Robert Piehl supports narrative theology but rejects the use of narrative therapy in Christian practice. His critique, rather than being focused on practical or pastoral aspects, and with limited presentation of the practical aspects of narrative therapy anyway, focuses on the postmodern background and the historical, philosophical and ideological aspects that are the basis of narrative therapy. Indeed, the same basis is claimed by the narrative therapy authors to be a sine qua non element for the practice itself which, on the other hand, certainly speaks in favour of Piehl’s prioritizing topic of his research. However, in many instances, it seems that Piehl and narrative therapy speak different languages.

Piehl argues that narrative therapy authors “misconstrue the philosophical arguments”\(^\text{216}\) and that they “have neither faithfully nor completely presented the main ideas of their inspirational sources,”\(^\text{217}\) which are mainly postmodern philosophers and social constructivist theorists. He then questions the narrative therapist’s formulation and function of language, ontological status of reality, social construction of ethics and even their vision of healthy personhood.\(^\text{218}\) Piehl presents narrative therapy in the context of the historical continuation of therapeutic ideas developed by family therapy groups. Thereby Piehl’s presentation is somewhat incomplete and does not deal with some important narrative therapy aspects such as the use of documents and ceremonies in therapy, the significant influence of re-membering, or the inclusion of communal aspects. For the sake of honest review it must be conceded that in 1999 Piehl did not have at his disposal all the literature available today. However, even then, there was a much richer literature base available if Piehl had decided to deal more with practice than theory, which was his ultimate focus. The author also builds his argument on diverse Australian and North American literature sources which do not

\(^{216}\) Robert O. Piehl, “From Narrative Therapy to Narrative Theology” (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 1999), 6.

\(^{217}\) Piehl, From Narrative, 7.

\(^{218}\) Piehl, From Narrative, 7.
necessarily follow the same frame of thinking in all aspects, because narrative therapy is an approach that welcomes different variations in different contexts, something especially visible in narrative work in indigenous contexts.

Piehl describes narrative therapy’s contribution: another way of conceptualizing change through an “additional way of organizing clinical phenomena” that enables the therapist to have “another way to envision clinical material;” the narrative therapist’s use of narrative metaphor produces rich resources in the literature and offers “another helpful way” for work with diverse treatment areas; the narrative therapist’s serious application from insights from other fields enriches the discipline of family therapy; a paradigm shift to narrative aims toward the relief of the psychotherapy profession’s past abuses and excesses; narrative therapy attempts “to interrupt the unconscious transmission of undesirable cultural values cloaked as facts” which serves as “a helpful corrective” for the previously mentioned psychotherapy abuse; intentional use of a collaborative stance flattens “the hierarchy between the ‘expert’ therapist and ‘nonexpert’ client;” a focus on ethical concerns is supported by literature that “contains explicit discussions devoted to ethics and moral considerations;” and finally as an “attractive feature of narrative therapy it has a short-term focus for length of treatment.”\textsuperscript{219}

Piehl concludes that narrative metaphors hold

intuitive appeal and is simple for most people to understand thus rapidly cultivating interest and hope in the treatment process. Because client motivation is an important factor in successful treatment outcomes, these aspects make narrative therapy a good candidate for the brief therapy modality. Because it can provide substantial change in a brief period it is suited to the current psychotherapy market with its financial exigencies of managed care.\textsuperscript{220}

Piehl highlights the use of narrative metaphor, social constructionist epistemology and most unique of all, an emphasis upon cultural metanarratives.\textsuperscript{221} Piehl’s critique is that the “narrative therapy community misreads its original sources” about the end of metanarratives and if it would read their sources accurately it would challenge their position, i.e.,, narrative therapy “wrongly excludes the Christian metanarrative from a beneficial role in therapeutic

\textsuperscript{219} Piehl, From Narrative, 49-52.
\textsuperscript{220} Piehl, From Narrative, 53.
\textsuperscript{221} Piehl, From Narrative, 54.
treatment” claiming the Christian story as illegitimate.\textsuperscript{222} In contrast, the narrative theology that Piehl advocates for, reconnects the person with a master story which may be beneficial and also desirable for a Christian-based therapy.\textsuperscript{223}

Piehl rejects White and Epston’s reading of Foucault as selective and inaccurate, therefore presenting an “inadequate picture of his important ideas, which leads to a suspect application of those ideas to clinical practice.” Furthermore, says Piehl, a narrative therapy community also accepts uncritically White and Epston’s reading of Foucault which “additionally distorts that reading” and also narrative practice.\textsuperscript{224} Piehl directs a similar critique toward narrative therapy’s authors’ selective reading of Lyotard about metanarratives and domains whereby “narrative therapists unreasonably credit Lyotard with ideas that are really their own, while justifying their unique therapeutic interventions by means of these ideas.”\textsuperscript{225}

Piehl accepts narrative theology and challenges narrative therapy in Christian contexts. He claims that narrative therapists use a “shallow conception” of narrative\textsuperscript{226} to articulate personal and individual stories which they favour over “oppressive cultural stories.” That is, for Piehl, again inconsistent with the reading and interpreting of narrative therapy’s inspirational resources\textsuperscript{227} and therefore narrative therapists, based on their rejection of metanarratives, are also incapable of affirming communal narratives.\textsuperscript{228} Narrative theology, on the other hand, equally affirms the importance of how narrative organises human life.

Narrative theology emphasises the priority of Jesus Christ, the communal telling and sacramental performance of his life, death and resurrection. The story of Jesus is prior to any narrative category or other conceptuality; and narrative theology is the discipline of a practice which presupposes this priority’ (Loughlin, 1966, p.i.) These comments indicate that narrative theologians believe in the importance of narrative for understanding human affairs, in particular, for engaging their faith and worldview, but that the category of narrative is subordinate to the person of Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{229}

\textsuperscript{222} Piehl, From Narrative, 54-55.
\textsuperscript{223} Piehl, From Narrative, 56.
\textsuperscript{224} Piehl, From Narrative, 56. Underlined by Piehl.
\textsuperscript{225} Piehl, From Narrative, 86.
\textsuperscript{226} Piehl, From Narrative, 108.
\textsuperscript{227} Piehl, From Narrative, 103-104.
\textsuperscript{228} Piehl, From Narrative, 109.
\textsuperscript{229} Piehl, From Narrative, 124. Piehl’s underlining.
Based on this, narrative theologians and narrative therapists, from Piehl’s perspective demonstrate a number of differences. Firstly, in the application of narrative, narrative therapists affirm only separate, individual and personal stories whereby narrative theologians, although also individually-oriented, apply narrative constructs to real and ideal social relations within a biblical perspective and the Christian story about God’s love for humanity – especially the story of Jesus and salvation that is personally connected to the life and story of every individual, and each of whose story is again ultimately contained in God’s story. Secondly, in Piehl’s analysis, Narrative therapists differ in the sources of narratives, assuming that all legitimate narratives are a product of the “human imagination” and come from within the person, whereby all the narratives that originate from outside of one’s self are “thought to be oppressive.” Narrative theologians, on the other hand “rely on a transcendental source as the origin for their authoritative narrative,” and those narratives are perceived as “true stories” expressed in “truth categories” and of which the biblical story is one example. Thirdly, they are different in their assumptions regarding totalities, Piehl arguing that narrative therapists fail to discriminate between “totality” (being part of a great communicational network) and the “totalizing process” (making connections between different phenomena), and that by favouring fragmental stories of personal immediate experience confuse “the account for the event” and “the narration-story for the story-event.” They therefore “cannot conceive how many narratives can tell but one story.” This leads them to a false conclusion where “they take any account that posits a totality as inherently totalising and therefore oppressive” that then makes it impossible for them to perceive any possibility of “nontotalizing metanarratives.”

One of the specific metanarratives, according to Piehl, that the narrative therapist also considers as oppressive is “the Christian master story.” He suggests that even though “the Bible is the text of totality,” narrative theologians, realize the difference between totality and its representation in metanarrative form, whereas in Christianity totality is, for example, expressed as the Kingdom of God. Yet this totality of the Kingdom of God, explains Piehl, is

230 Piehl, From Narrative, 127-130.
231 Piehl, From Narrative, 131-132.
232 Piehl, From Narrative, 137.
233 Piehl, From Narrative, 159.
234 Piehl, From Narrative, 141.
also presented in the individual story and person of Jesus Christ which is the story that constantly unfolds for each believer as well as for the faith community. It does so by a continual re-telling of that story and in that way permanently (re)shapes itself. Through this storytelling process it directs its view also to the eschaton or the things to come for the full actualization of its story.\textsuperscript{235} Thus, Piehl criticizes narrative therapy for its mistaken view of the Christian metanarrative, in that “it unfairly characterizes Christianity as totalizing and oppressive” and that “narrative therapy literature presents an impoverished view of the Christian story.”\textsuperscript{236} Although he doesn’t attempt to use narrative theology “as a resource to correct problems that narrative therapy creates for itself with its commitment to postmodern epistemological principles” he does attempt “to demonstrate that narrative theology is a valuable resource for Christian therapists as they engage narrative therapy literature.”\textsuperscript{237}

In defence of Christian metanarrative, Piehl, borrowing from Middleton and Walsh as well as from Derrida, describes it as “pharmacological” and explains that the Christian master story can be seen as a “pharmacon” or a drug that is either medicine and/or poison. In other words it has the potential to serve both for oppression and for justice, for violence as well as for healing.\textsuperscript{238} Thus, building on Middleton and Walsh, Piehl highlights that the Bible actually works ultimately against totalisation – a fact that can be recognised in two identifiable “counter-ideological” dimensions/aspects or “antitotalizing factors.” Firstly, in “sensitivity to suffering” which is in the core of the exodus story where human suffering caused by injustice and powerlessness initiates God’s redemptive response of compassion and justice,\textsuperscript{239} and secondly, in the biblical “affirmation of God as universal Creator and Judge of all nations” where it is apparent that “God has an overarching narrative purpose contrary to the many oppressive systems and stories which dominate the landscape of the world.”\textsuperscript{240} Piehl, together with Middleton and Walsh, finds further support for the antitotalizing dimension in the life and work of Jesus Christ, with his compassion and sensitivity toward human suffering and his respect for marginalized people.\textsuperscript{241}

\textsuperscript{235} Piehl, \textit{From Narrative}, 141-145.  
\textsuperscript{236} Piehl, \textit{From Narrative}, 163.  
\textsuperscript{237} Piehl, \textit{From Narrative}, 163.  
\textsuperscript{238} Piehl, \textit{From Narrative}, 164.  
\textsuperscript{239} Piehl, \textit{From Narrative}, 165.  
\textsuperscript{240} Piehl, \textit{From Narrative}, 166.  
\textsuperscript{241} Piehl, \textit{From Narrative}, 167.
Under the authority of a Christian metanarrative, each person may long to be part of something larger, longer and stronger “than our own little worlds of stories.” Christians believe that their convictions about the world “really matter,” that the impacts of those convictions “dramatically alter how the world is experienced” and that “the value of convictions is not secondary to personal preference.” He suggests that Christians “do their evangelism in an open and honest way,” contrary to narrative therapists who “promote their views under the guise of psychotherapy, an arena not generally considered a forum for worldview alteration,” adding that “there is something cut-like in charging money for instructions about a new and radical worldview.” The Christian story embodies a means of liberation within metanarratives that “can provide alternate ways of organizing experience beyond personally restricted stories.” Christian metanarrative “affords the opportunity for individual stories to be taken up into the larger story of God with its richer resources” as, for example, when granting forgiveness.

Piehl differentiates between the “significantly different view” of narrative therapists and narrative theologians on ethics, especially regarding the role community has in a moral formation. In Piehl’s view, narrative therapists advocate for an actively constituted, considered and participated postmodern morality where there is Christian cultivation of virtues embodied and narrative formed “within the practices of Christian communities seeking to faithfully live out the story of God.” In response, the church serves as a community of moral formation in contrast to a personally constructed moral choice within the postmodern viewpoint.

In conclusion, there are three main differences between narrative therapy’s worldview and the ethics of the Christian story: the authority of the source of ethics; virtues and non-relativistic ethics in relation to them; and the role community has in shaping and sustaining

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242 Piehl, From Narrative, 168.
243 Piehl, From Narrative, 169.
244 Piehl, From Narrative, 171.
245 Piehl, From Narrative, 172.
246 Piehl, From Narrative, 173.
247 Piehl, From Narrative, 178.
ethical practices. These factors will be considered in the discussion of findings from the data.

3.6 Cultural examples: Use of narratives in African cultural context

3.6.1 Edward Wimberly: African American narrative pastoral care

Narrative practice and theology interact within a web of cultural themes so this section addresses specific views of how narratives ideas and practices understood and applied within African cultural settings of Christian pastoral care. Edward P. Wimberly describes the black pastors’ use of narratives in pastoral care. His approach to the use of narratives is in many aspects outside the scope of a White/Epston frame of thought and practice while showing an interesting way of contextualizing work with narratives.

Wimberley affirms the crucial role of storyteller in the work of an African American black pastor. Storytelling offers a popular approach in African American culture because it is oral, and contrary to the dominant western culture that is visual and focused more on seeing, reading and writing. Storytelling is “the basic method of learning within the black culture,” and has ‘the village’ metaphor as the dominant cultural context. Telling and retelling stories in African American faith communities helps in re-establishing village functions that have been lost, or have collapsed due to assimilation in western societal structures. The pastor’s “major skill,” is his ability in “approachable,” “integrating,” “healing,” “facilitative,” “anxiety-free” and “conflict-free” storytelling.

Wimberley’s approach differs in that personal and communal stories are used largely to transfer the experience and knowledge of the person and community rather than develop a multi-storied scenario to enrich and thicken the alternative stories. Alternative stories are actually Biblical stories because “a truly narrative style of pastoral care in the black church

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248 Piehl, From Narrative, 217.
250 Wimberly, African American Pastoral Care, 114.
251 Wimberly, African American Pastoral Care, 138.
252 Wimberly, African American Pastoral Care, 114-122.
draws upon personal stories from the pastor’s life, stories from the practice of ministry, and stories from the Bible.”

Black pastors use different types of stories such as long stories, anecdotes, short sayings or metaphors according to the needs of the parishioners. They link personal experiences and core beliefs with a faith story or the story from the Bible. A dominant plot that gives life meaning to African American Christians is an “eschatological plot,” the one unfolding God’s story of hope, healing and liberation in the midst of people’s suffering and oppression. Through the processes of story-telling and story-listening the pastor helps people to develop “story language” and “story discernment” so they can recognise God’s unfolding story in their lives.

Connecting personal story and Biblical story is crucial to this method. Wimberly has shifted from his earlier view of a pastor as a caregiver toward the “Bible as pastor” model, where the Bible becomes a primary caregiver by using narratives in three ways: “definitional ceremony” as used by Michael White; a “Bible as pastor” model; and “several other models of re-villageing.” The third way has three optional models: a model that “focuses on sharing stories at particular points in the counselling process;” a model where people are “acting out specific themes in stories;” and a model based on treatment goals. Wimberly focuses on the goal-oriented model and “preplanning stories,” where counsellors identify the goals and then search their own experience for the story from their pre-planned repertoire which is similar to the one of the counsellee. Only after that does “the process of building a story for counselling begin.”

Similarly when working with couples, Wimberly tries to support a realistic “healthy couple narrative” that recognises the strengths and weaknesses of each spouse as opposed to an “unhealthy couple narrative” where one or both spouses try to maintain the ideal and unrealistic spouse image, or when working with families, where “realistic story” characterises

253 Wimberly, African American Pastoral Care, 1.
254 Wimberly, African American Pastoral Care, 130.
255 Wimberly, African American Pastoral Care, 128.
256 Wimberly, African American Pastoral Care, 130-131.
healthy families while unhealthy families blame some of the family members for a crisis. The pastor’s role in both cases is to support the healthy stories and share their personal positive or negative experiences, perhaps more of a modelling than a narrative method.

The common point in Wimberly’s narrative model and White/Epston’s narrative therapy is what Wimberly refers to as the “village reconstructive narrative method” of Michael’s White’s “definitional ceremony” work in the example of Aboriginal communities. Wimberly points out that through telling and retelling of stories as demonstrated by White “the supportive and maintaining function of the village was re-created.”

Stories are used as a means of enriching people’s awareness of God’s drama unfolding in their lives, despite suffering ... unfolding God’s drama in ways that bring healing, sustaining, guidance, and reconciliation ... enabling parishioners to develop a language ... in the art of counselling to make points, suggest solutions, facilitate cooperation, increase self-awareness, and discover resources ... [creating] conflict-free and anxiety-free narratives to help people grow emotionally and interpersonally.

3.6.2 Tapiwa N. Mucherera: A holistic narrative pastoral care and counselling approach

Professor of pastoral counselling and a United Methodist pastor, Tapiwa Mucherera focuses on a postcolonial indigenous context, especially Zimbabwe. The indigenous context story is a way of life, says Mucherera, thus narrative pastoral counselling was always present, including in earlier times. Problems would be shared in the family, community or a group called a “palaver” which takes many different forms such as family, extended family, community, formal or informal and open or closed gatherings. The purpose is to resolve a crisis or a problem or it can be just a meeting time. Traditionally it is led by a family elder or community chief but everyone who is at the palaver has a voice.

Mucherera advocates that the western way of therapy and counselling is inadequate for the indigenous context because of its focus on individuality, autonomy and independence. Indigenous counsellors should be trained to “get off their couch or chair” and enter their

neighbourhood using both counsellor and social worker skills. He highlights the significance of a history as a contextual story. History is made by people who transmitted the stories of their ancestors so both past and contemporary stories form individual and communal identity.\textsuperscript{260}

In the African context Mucherera recognizes three different layers of stories: traditional or precolonial stories; colonial stories; postcolonial or neo-colonial stories. All three must be addressed when applying a narrative pastoral counselling approach,\textsuperscript{261} and one of the goals is community work, thereby giving voice to suppressed communities and working with marginalised communities for justice. Mucherera advocates for resurrection and “insurrection” of indigenous “subjugate knowledges” (the term Michael White borrowed from Michel Foucault), that have become integrated within contemporary knowledge and have been disqualified by colonialism and Western Christianity as unscientific, primitive and pagan. The totality of the traditional way of life is lost and gives no answers to the present situation of indigenous people but neither does the Western way of life offer better solutions. Mucherera writes that most of the “people of neo-colonial nations today live in in-between worlds. They feel the pull of the traditional world and the push of the modern world.”\textsuperscript{262} Colonialism created new and dominant narratives for the indigenous especially in the field of education. The ‘truth’ of Western standards about life and knowledge was imposed on indigenous peoples through the compulsory content of what they had to learn and through the language of the imposer.

Pastoral workers practice in a context where “colonizers’ dispossessioning indigenous people’s language and power had and still has an impact on the practice of narrative pastoral counseling.”\textsuperscript{263} Thus, language and power are two crucial elements for that practice and language does not simply express emotions or thoughts but possesses both meaning and power. The misuse of language and misunderstanding of behaviours, worldviews and values by new Western regimes led to the naming of indigenous people as primitive, mad, ill and pathological. Unfortunately, Christianity arrived along with a Western cultural package and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{260} Mucherera, \textit{Meet}, 1-3.
\item \textsuperscript{261} Mucherera, \textit{Meet}, 4.
\item \textsuperscript{262} Mucherera, \textit{Meet}, 13.
\item \textsuperscript{263} Mucherera, \textit{Meet}, 15.
\end{itemize}
contributed to the marginalisation of indigenous peoples where, in the words of Godfrey Z. Kapenzi, “cultural imperialism displaced pure religious evangelicalism.” Further, Mucherera writes: “Humans create culture, and in turn culture helps construct an individual’s identity. If one’s culture is removed, then one is left with a valueless body because of the loss of self.” For all these reasons it is “imperative” for a narrative pastoral counsellor to understand the indigenous context he or she works with.

Mucherera quotes the African approach, noting that illustrating indigenous belief is how individual personal identity is rooted in the community. Africans say “I am because we are; since we are, therefore, I am.” He believes that narratives that emerge out of communities are “relationally based and unfold out of one’s relationship.” Mucherera describes communal relations as holistic in the indigenous context. They embrace the living or all of the creation, the living dead or the cloud of witnesses and the spiritual world, including God. Accordingly community “assumes all of life - the Creator (the spirit world included), the created, and those yet to come into existence.” In the indigenous tradition, when these relationships are harmed they use rituals to correct the wrong and make it right. The traditional African community is like a Global Village and truly believes that what affects my neighbour affects me as well. Each individual’s survival and well-being is in relation to the depth of their sense of community. Thus, if one ignores the problems of the other they may soon become our own problems.

Mucherera, in a similar fashion to Wimberley, suggests the concept of “revillaging” as a way of blending the past and the present for the African people.

Revillaging is the idea of reclaiming the core values of traditional Africa... In traditional Africa, the village provided the cultural and religious foundations for the African. It was in the village that one got his or her psychological, mental, physical, and spiritual support, upbringing, and identity.

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264 Mucherera, Meet, 18.
265 Mucherera, Meet, 20.
266 “It takes a village to raise a child.” Mucherera, Meet, 81.
267 African saying: “if you find a tortoise on a tree, it did not get there by itself,” meaning, wherever an individual ends up he or she didn’t get there alone. Mucherera, Meet, 81.
268 Mucherera, Meet, 82.
269 Mucherera, Meet, 87.
270 Mucherera, Meet, 89.
The colonisation and capitalisation of Africa shook these foundations. Re-establishing the “village” should primarily focus on orphans and widows, especially in the rural areas, and, for Mucherera, the church would be the best place to attempt such an effort. Mucherera’s advocacy for the church is because it is a community “with a particular ‘story’ and belief system” that fits into the African context because “African community is a storytelling community.” Identities are formed and healing is achieved in indigenous context through telling and hearing personal stories of joy and suffering. Through these stories people can also discern God’s work in their lives.271

In African communities the use of rituals is common and natural. Rituals are “repetitive patterns” and “help reinforce desired outcomes.”272 Western counselling orientation and indigenous social customs differ in that counselling in the west promotes a client’s autonomy and independence, contrary to the practice of palaver, and counsellors are seen as “mental health professionals” who do not leave their office to serve the client. In many cases this is inadequate in the indigenous context. For HIV/AIDS patients in Africa Mucherera pleads “save the body first” because if the body dies there is no mind to work with. Mucherea also advocates a holistic approach as much more suitable because it “might not offer them a cure, but will provide a place for healing emotionally, relationally, and spiritually.”273 The world operating on the individualism principle, “each person for him – or herself, and God for us all,” forgets that God created us for relationship and interdependence, and above all, “with the poorest of the poor.”274

Only holistic counselling methods can survive in the indigenous context, claims Mucherera. Counsellors must be multi-disciplinary if they want to be of any help, especially to children where the counsellor will often be concerned with a child’s next meal rather than applying expert counselling skills. Being connected with the palaver, be it in local homes, community, church or school, is a part of the healing process. Two types of palaver exist. One for education

271 Mucherera, Meet, 90.
272 Mucherera, Meet, 92.
273 Italics by Mucherera, Meet, 100.
274 Mucherera, Meet, 101.
or fellowship, the other to resolve problems affecting the family or community. Both naturally use story so a narrative approach is commonly used at a palaver.\textsuperscript{275}

Mucherera considers the church palaver as a “modern-day palaver” where the facilitating leader or community elder ensures that everyone gets a voice. Unlike North American narrative counselling sessions the African palaver considers all participants as “outsider witnesses” in a narrative therapy sense, and full contributors to the palaver’s conversations. The facilitator uses “we” when questioning (What joys or problems do we have to share today?) and the emphasis will be on the problem and not on the person such as when saying: “What problem, crisis or narrative brings you to the palaver assembly today?”\textsuperscript{276} People will often use metaphors, proverbs, idioms or sayings to express emotions or as easier way of sharing the problem story. The facilitator ensures that the conversation remains externalised, naming the problem, how it affects the individual or relationships, and supports richer and thicker descriptions.

Questions trace the history of the problem. Its circumstances and “exceptions” and “unique outcomes” will be explored in the answers given, by simultaneously applying “deconstruction” as “the dismantling of some of the false beliefs, or of mystifying parts of the problem that one might have internalized.”\textsuperscript{277} The goal of the entire process is – restorying, so that people might see their story from a different perspective. Mucherera builds on Wimberly’s “Recalling Our Own Stories” and cites his four stages of re-editing as “identifying the themes at work in the various mythologies in our lives, mapping and charting the influences of these themes, discerning where God’s renewing influence is as we come to grips with these themes and their influences, and making plans that will aid us in changing some of the themes.”\textsuperscript{278}

Despite the African Shona saying that ‘silence is golden,’ Mucherera appeals for the African context “to speak the unspeakable” because it is the only way for the traditionally unspeakable to lose its power. To name things brings power and control over them, as God

\textsuperscript{275} Mucherera, Meet, 108-109.  
\textsuperscript{276} Mucherera, Meet, 110-111.  
\textsuperscript{277} Mucherera, Meet, 112-113.  
\textsuperscript{278} Mucherera, Meet, 113.
first named all He created, and by doing so palaver becomes a space to create hope, make meaning and speak the unspeakable. As creatures of relationships, we are called to each other and no one should act alone because “one finds healing in the wisdom of many.”

3.7 Scriptural narratives within personal ministry

3.7.1 John Henderson: Biblical narratives in personal ministry of the Word

The final author represented in this literature review presents a Scriptural view that incorporates a method for using narratives in a Christian ministry. Narratives, and certainly biblical narratives, are also in use within Biblical Counseling practice. John Henderson is on the board of both the Biblical Counseling Coalition and the Association of Biblical Counselors (ABC). Henderson finds support in that over half of Scripture and about 40 percent of the Hebrew Bible is written in a narrative form and that God had self-revealed “through a genre of writing structured in the form of a story.” Furthermore, the amount of narrative used in the Bible, says Henderson, encourages us to learn how to counsel from it, given that, like all other well-told stories, the different narratives of the Bible have “character, setting, scenes, plot, conflict, resolution, and closure.”

He affirms that biblical narratives can only be rightly understood within the bigger story of God’s redemption plan, for they are not randomly gathered historical facts. “Rather, they create and impose theological content, perspective, conviction, action and direction. Through the stories, God reveals Himself. Through the stories, He reveals us and provides a means to interpret our lives and experiences.”

Biblical narratives engage, alert and challenge us personally, provoking us through theological action to believe or disbelieve, obey or disobey, and finally, offering us theological direction and leading us to God. Scripture speaks to individuals because the “many narratives of

279 Mucherera, Meet, 132.
284 Henderson, Using Biblical Narrative, 323-324.
Scripture contribute to the redemptive story of Scripture and point to the Redeemer, but in a way that calls you by name and meets you right where you stand, or sit, or kneel, or lie.”

Henderson asks how to counsel people by using biblical narrative in the personal ministry of the Word, and answers by proposing nine basic elements or steps that align methodologically and I have commented thematically in line with narrative approaches.

(1) **Know the biblical narratives and their people well.** Study them in depth to discern their meaning, significance, grammar and application to modern life, thus becoming “no less than the active voice of God in our lives – governing, guiding, feeding, and compelling us,” in ways that shape the counsellors thoughts, emotions, passions, and activities.

(2) **Hear people and their narratives well.** The counsellor will “hear enough of their history, relationships, thoughts, activities, motivations, and desires” and be able to understand them and respond to them with “prudence and love.”

(3) **See the parallels and connections.** “Biblical counselling aims to fuse the two horizons of the biblical text and the person at hand ... by seeing the parallels and connections between the people of Scripture and the person we serve.” The people of the Bible and people today talk, feel and act herefore, each of us, with our words, attitudes and actions, may find himself or herself in the lines of the Bible stories. The situations, themes and truths of the bible narratives resemble, reflectively inform and parallel those of our own lives.

(4) **Enter the story together.** This counsellor and counselee may turn to a particular biblical narrative and read it together for when “we see enough parallels and connections between the stories of the people in front of us and the stories of Scripture, we pick one of those stories and enter it.”

(5) **Stay inside the story together.** By paying attention to a particular story, consider what is revealed about God and what people would be expected to want, think, feel and pursue under similar circumstances. The focus in not so much on “what” persons might think or do but

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286 Italics here, and later in this review by ZV and quoted as in Henderson, *Using Biblical Narrative*, 325-335.
rather “upon whom” a persons’ reflections might turn concerning their “focus, look, trust, rest, rejoice, hope and cast.”

(6) Extract a few relevant truths. It is better to settle on a few ideas rather than a “flood of truths and ideas” that will overwhelm and confuse the counselee.292

(7) Enhance the narrative interpretation and application from the rest of Scripture. Given that “hundreds of cross-references might come to mind” when the counsellor uses biblical narrative they still have to be implemented and applied within “the context of the whole Bible.” The canon of scripture helps counsellors “stay true to the meaning of the narrative.”293

(8) Apply the narrative truth to the here-and-now personal life. The key here would be to refine endless possibilities to a few truths to be believed and responded to. Insights from biblical narrative “tries to get who we are in Christ and what we do in Christ harmonized and cooperating in daily life.”294

(9) Encourage over time. The sometimes slow-moving and gradual transformation of people described in those stories “can offer comfort to our stubborn souls” because all of us, each in his or her own way, are “a work in progress.” We have to patiently accept our time of learning and growing. “We simply cannot cover the whole story in a single sitting. We cannot digest and apply every truth in one conversation. The only way to joyfully persevere in this work is to accept the smallness and temporariness of our part. The part matters, we are assured, but as a humble and joyful representative of a God who is eternally wise and supreme.”295

Henderson is interesting for his respect for biblical narrative itself. While the origins of narrative therapy are a long way from traditional biblical approaches, his themes and modes of engaging counsellees will inform our later discussion and help to integrate biblical story with narrative practice.

In the following chapter the findings from the survey questionnaire, interviews and focus group are presented.

Chapter 4

DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Survey questionnaire data analysis

This chapter presents research findings from the survey questionnaire, the interviews and the focus group. The final subchapter summarises the main themes from all three research phases and outlines topics for the Discussion.

4.1.1 Survey questionnaire questions and structure

General questions:

1) Gender:
   a) Male
   b) Female

2) Age:
   a) 20 – 30
   b) 30 – 40
   c) 40 – 50
   d) Older than 50

Counsellor identity questions:

Question three identifies self-description. Question four focuses on field experience. Question five focuses on Professional Associations.

3) Occupation – your preferred description:
   a) Christian counsellor
   b) Pastoral counsellor
   c) Other (please specify):

4) Years of practice in your field:
   a) Less than 5
   b) Between 5 and 10
   c) Between 10 and 20
   d) More than 20

5) Are you a member of a professional association of counsellors? (e.g. Christian Counselling Association of Australia (CCAA), Association of Personal Counsellors (APC), Psychotherapy and Counsellors Association of Australia (PACFA), Spiritual Care Australia (SCA) or any other.)
   a) Yes (please specify one or more):
   b) No

Preferred counselling approach questions:

6) What approaches, methods, techniques or theories of counselling do you use most in your practice? (Please rate from 1-5, 1 being not important to 5 being most important. Please use multiple responses if needed.)
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3</td>
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</table>

7) The reason I use these approaches is mainly because: (Please use multiple responses if needed.)

a) I find them the most helpful and efficient in my practice.
b) They fit the best to me as a person and to my personal style of counselling.
c) They offer me the best way to integrate Christian spirituality, theology and values in counselling practice.
d) The basic assumptions align with my personal Christian faith.
e) The basic assumptions align with the context of contemporary life today.
f) Other reasons (please specify):

Education, training and professional development questions:
8) What percentage, of a total 100 percent, would you assign to each element in the education of the Christian and pastoral counsellor?
   a) Learning about the theories of counselling and psychotherapy.
   b) Learning about the practical skills, methods and techniques in counselling.
   c) Practising counselling with other participants.
   d) Practising counselling with outside clients.
   e) Other elements (please specify and add percent).

9) Would you require an experience of personal counselling for the participants themselves during their training as Christian and pastoral counsellors?
   a) Yes.
      i. For the minimum of how many counselling sessions?
   b) No.

10) What is the best context for the education of Christian and pastoral counsellors?
    a) Academic institution (theological college, seminary, university...)
    b) Specialised Christian organisation specialising in practical training (Christian institute...)
    c) Church
    d) Other (please specify):

11) Based on your practitioner experience and your commitment to the improvement of future training models: (i) what are the core elements that should be considered in education of Christian and pastoral counsellors and (ii) how are they specific to their training and Christian faith in comparison with solely secular models?

NOTE: Question eleven mirrors the third question from the interviews that followed. Responses were later compared to those of the interviewed group. Question twelve invited additional comment and question thirteen invited respondents who used narrative therapy to take part in the interviews.1

4.1.2 Participants and process

The questionnaire was applied with a ten month delay. The CCAA gave permission for distribution via the members’ email network. In his email on May 20th 2015, the President

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1 For original questionnaire see Appendix.
noted that questionnaires had been sent to 718 people and 424 had opened them. I received 51 responses and discarded one corrupted, unreadable response. 50 respondents reflects an 11.8% response rate from the entire membership. Participation was voluntary yet not completely anonymous due to email sender addresses. Some email addresses were cryptic letters and numbers. Others were forwarded by the President. Respondents who decided to answer were comfortable with non-anonymity. This could have limited the number of respondents given that one respondent complained about the issue. As the questionnaire was not notably personal it was not expected that this factor would affect the quality of responses. All respondents were anonymous after data was entered.

4.1.3 Questionnaire findings

General information about respondents is followed by the preferred psychotherapy and counselling approaches, especially narrative therapy in a Christian counselling setting. Qualitative responses to training and education of future Christian counsellors then follow.

Gender

Responses (74%/n.37 female; 26%/n.23 male) reflect representation of the total CCAA membership as given in “CCAA Survey Results – February 2015” with 73.4% female and 26.6% male from 195 replies. This is therefore a smaller (50) but still accurate sample, by gender, of the researched population.

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Table Q1. Gender

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3 NOTE: All SPSS tables retain the format of commas instead of dots.
Years of Practice
The largest percentage of respondents 42% (21) had practiced for less than 5 years; 28% (14) between 5-10 years; 18% (9) between 10-20 years; and 12% (6) more than 20 years.

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Table Q2. Years of practice

Figure Q1. Years of practice
Age
At 78% (39) the majority were more than 50 years old followed by 40-50 at 14% (7); a small number of other categories 6% (3) 30-40 years old; and 2% (1) 20-30 years.

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<tr>
<td>more than 50</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>78,0</td>
<td>78,0</td>
<td>100,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100,0</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table Q3. Age of responder

Preferred self-description
In total, 68% (34) were marked “Christian counsellor,” the other 32% (16) offered additional explanation or terminology as presented in Table 5. Zero percent of the respondents described their work as “pastoral counselling,” although one respondent noted a “pastoral counsellor flavour.” The zero percentage finding is especially interesting in relation to my search for the common ground of Christian, pastoral and Biblical counselling. It seems that Christian counsellors who are also association members view themselves as a distinctive category of, I hypothesise, counselling professionals. However, as we will later see in the findings, almost 60% of them marked “biblical counselling” important or very important as their preferred counselling approach. Biblical counselling has, in my opinion, at least a significant potential to be fairly pastoral even if it’s not pastoral by default. Another aspect of
that choice might be that biblical counselling transparently represents and argues for Christian values and identity that brings balance to the use of other approaches and strengthens the Christian counsellor’s identity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Column N %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>26,0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>74,0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of responder</th>
<th>Column N %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>2,0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>6,0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>14,0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 50</td>
<td>78,0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Christian counsellor</th>
<th>Column N %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>68,0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>32,0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pastoral counsellor</th>
<th>Column N %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>0,0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>100,0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of practice</th>
<th>Column N %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 5 years</td>
<td>42,0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 5 – 10 years</td>
<td>28,0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 10 – 20 years</td>
<td>18,0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 20 years</td>
<td>12,0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table Q4. Comparison between questions one to four with percentage of Christian and pastoral counsellors’ orientation

In preference to “Christian counselling” four respondents called themselves: “counsellor who is a Christian;” and “who happens to also be a Christian;” or “a Christian who counsels.” Three respondents preferred the term “counsellor,” one adding “non-Christian organisation” to describe their place of work. Another two preferred using two terms; “psychotherapist, counsellor” and one just “psychotherapist.” Single answers describe identities defined by occupational specifics and work setting as “Christian counsellor and family therapist,” “Christian psychologist,” “Counsellor and academic,” “Counsellor-educator,” “Drug and alcohol counsellor,” and “School Chaplain with a pastoral counsellor flavour.” Two answers define identity within more personal expressions such as “Trainee Christian Counsellor (third year student – Grad Certificate)” and “Sole Trader.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation – preferred description (if not Christian or pastoral counsellor)</th>
<th>Answer frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Counsellor who is Christian</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsellor</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychotherapist, counsellor</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychotherapist</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian counsellor and family therapist</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sole Trader</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Psychologist</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsellor and academic</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Chaplain with a pastoral counsellor flavour</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table Q5. Qualitative answers to question 3/c about occupation preferred description

Table Q6. Membership in professional counselling association

Question five asks about membership in CCAA and/or other counselling and/or psychotherapy associations. Understandably, 100% of the respondents are CCAA members with a majority 60% (30) solely (two “associate members” added), and 36% (18) (other PACFA combinations added) both CCAA and PACFA.

Question six explores which approaches, methods, techniques or theories of counselling respondents use the most in their practice. From the answers in the open-ended section it is apparent that this question elicited different responses. Some respondents referred to “approach” or “theory” of counselling where others mentioned specific “methods” or “techniques.” It seems that the last two terms led respondents beyond the primary research focus and were unnecessary.
In Figures Q2.1-6 six bar charts show relations to preferred counselling and psychotherapy approaches used by Christian counsellors: psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioural, systemic family, and person-centred. Biblical counselling and narrative therapy are given for comparison. More detailed statistical findings are shown in the following tables.

Figures Q2.1-6. The four most used approaches in comparison with biblical counselling and narrative therapy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach</th>
<th>Column</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Psychodynamic approach (Psychoanalysis)</td>
<td>Not important</td>
<td>20,5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>27,3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neither important nor unimportant</td>
<td>15,9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>27,3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Most important</td>
<td>9,1%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy</td>
<td>Not important</td>
<td>2,2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approach</td>
<td>Not important</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Neither important nor unimportant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rational-emotive behavioural therapy (REBT)</td>
<td>Not important</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Neither important nor unimportant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23,1%</td>
<td>35,9%</td>
<td>20,5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person-Centred Therapy (Client-Centred Approach – Rogerian)</td>
<td>Not important</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Neither important nor unimportant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2,1%</td>
<td>8,5%</td>
<td>17,0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gestalt Therapy</td>
<td>Not important</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Neither important nor unimportant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18,4%</td>
<td>26,3%</td>
<td>36,8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existential Therapy</td>
<td>Not important</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Neither important nor unimportant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28,9%</td>
<td>7,9%</td>
<td>31,6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systemic Family Therapy</td>
<td>Not important</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Neither important nor unimportant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10,9%</td>
<td>28,3%</td>
<td>8,7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)</td>
<td>Not important</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Neither important nor unimportant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32,4%</td>
<td>26,5%</td>
<td>26,5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biblical Counselling</td>
<td>Not important</td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>Neither important nor unimportant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9,3%</td>
<td>37,2%</td>
<td>20,9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table Q7. Evaluation of approaches, methods, techniques or theories of counselling and their preferred use in respondents’ practice without five postmodern therapies.

Table Q8 shows the importance attributed to each approach without postmodern therapies.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The most important</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Cumulative importance – three columns summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Person-Centred Therapy (Client-Centred Approach – Rogerian) 34.0%</td>
<td>Systemic Family Therapy 39.1%</td>
<td>Biblical counselling 37.2%</td>
<td>Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy 87.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table Q8. Assessment of the importance of counselling approach without postmodern therapies

Table Q8 reveals that the most important counselling approaches are person-centred or client-centred. Cognitive behavioural therapy and biblical counselling are slightly less than one percent more favoured than systemic therapy. The same result is in the “very important” category with the exception of biblical counselling that was replaced by systemic family therapy which gained the highest percentage.

In summary, when all three categories that in some way attach importance to any approach are evaluated, the same four approaches are the most preferred. Cognitive-behavioural therapy has the highest percentage of 87.0%, and if rational-emotive behavioural therapy (REBT) is added with 56.4% this clearly shows the trend for Christian counsellors. It appears that REBT is perceived as fairly close to cognitive-behavioural views and framework.

My decision to single out five particular “postmodern” approaches for this research was based on the literature, personal experience with some of the approaches and on a professional curiosity to explore them in an Australian setting which is, as presumed, different from a Croatian setting. In a Croatian context, for example, the most used postmodern approach is “cybernetics of psychotherapy” and somewhat “brief solution-focused therapy.” There is an
almost complete absence of collaborative therapy, narrative therapy and constructivist psychotherapy. A significant degree of difference appears in the Australian context.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Brief Solution-Focused Therapy</th>
<th>Not important</th>
<th>7.0%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>44.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neither important or unimportant</td>
<td>23.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>18.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Most important</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative Therapy</td>
<td>Not important</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neither important or unimportant</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>21.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Most important</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cybernetics of Psychotherapy</td>
<td>Not important</td>
<td>52.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neither important or unimportant</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Most important</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narrative Therapy</td>
<td>Not important</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neither important or unimportant</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Most important</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructivist Psychotherapy</td>
<td>Not important</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Important</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neither important or unimportant</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Very important</td>
<td>5.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Most important</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table Q9. Evaluation of five postmodern therapies**

Table Q10 shows the importance attributed to each postmodern approach.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The most important</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Cumulative importance – three columns summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Narrative Therapy</td>
<td>Collaborative Therapy 21.6%</td>
<td>Brief Solution-Focused Therapy 44.2%</td>
<td>Brief Solution-Focused Therapy 69.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief Solution-Focused Therapy 7.0%</td>
<td>Brief Solution-Focused Therapy 18.6%</td>
<td>Narrative Therapy 38.1%</td>
<td>Narrative Therapy 66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative Therapy 5.4%</td>
<td>Narrative Therapy 16.7%</td>
<td>Collaborative Therapy 29.7%</td>
<td>Collaborative Therapy 56.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructivist Psychotherapy 2.9%</td>
<td>Constructivist Psychotherapy 5.7%</td>
<td>Cybernetics of Psychotherapy 11.8%</td>
<td>Constructivist Psychotherapy 20.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cybernetics of Psychotherapy 0.0%</td>
<td>Cybernetics of Psychotherapy 0.0%</td>
<td>Constructivist Psychotherapy 11.4%</td>
<td>Cybernetics of Psychotherapy 11.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table Q10. Assessed importance of postmodern therapies**
At 11.9% narrative therapy has the highest percentage in “the most important” category. It positions itself within the three highest scores, together with brief solution-focused therapy and collaborative therapy in all three categories. Cumulative assessment of importance positions narrative therapy in the sixth place of fourteen approaches researched and as the second postmodern therapy after the brief solution-focused approach.

Cybernetics of psychotherapy has the highest percentage (52.9%) of “not important” from all fourteen approaches, and as noted above, very different to the Croatian preference. The second highest “not important” is constructivist psychotherapy with 40.0%. Both statistics provide stark contrast to the dominance of cognitive-behavioural approaches on the affirmative importance scale.

TURF analysis explored some other aspects of the approaches used and presents the findings in Table 11. TURF identifies the combinations of approaches that are preferred by the largest proportion of respondents. The ‘reach’ of a combination of methods is the proportion of people who prefer at least one of these methods. One interpretation of these results may involve mixing the methods. 68% (34) of respondents prefer the use of Person-centred approaches. If biblical counselling is added to that number, 82% (41) of respondents combine those two approaches. With the addition of cognitive-behavioural approaches this percent is 88% (44). When chosen, narrative therapy may likely be used eclectically with the previous three, with the addition of brief-solution-focused therapy in most cases.

However, reach indicates the percentage of people using at least one of the methods, not necessarily both of them. It therefore speaks more to the usefulness and supports for several topics in an educational model, for example, if the model seeks to represent the views of as many people as possible (i.e., at least one method used by almost everybody).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Group Size</th>
<th>Reach, respondents</th>
<th>Reach, % of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Person-Centred Therapy (Client-Centred Approach – Rogerian)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>68.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biblical Counselling, Person-Centred Therapy (Client-Centred Approach – Rogerian)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>82.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4 TURF - Total Unduplicated Reach and Frequency
Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy, Biblical Counselling, Person-Centred Therapy (Client-Centred Approach – Rogerian) 3 44 88.0
Narrative Therapy, Biblical Counselling, Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy, Person-Centred Therapy (Client-Centred Approach – Rogerian) 4 45 90.0
Brief Solution-Focused Therapy, Narrative Therapy, Biblical Counselling, Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy, Person-Centred Therapy (Client-Centred Approach – Rogerian) 5 46 92.0

Table Q11. Preferred combinations of various approaches

A comparison of means in Table Q12 offers additional evidence on the difference in the importance of various methods for different groups of respondents. At a 10% significance level the mean rating of Cognitive-behavioural therapy is higher among males (4.2) than among females (3.5). Even though the cybernetics of psychotherapy is one of the least popular approaches, it was given a higher average rating by counsellors below the age of 50 and by respondents who do not consider academic institutions to be the best context for the education of Christian and pastoral counsellors.

A psychodynamic approach (psychoanalysis) was rated higher by those who think that specialised Christian organisations are good for educating Christian and pastoral counsellors compared to those who think that such organizations do not provide the best context for educating counsellors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age over 50</th>
<th>3) Occupation – your preferred description</th>
<th>Years of practice</th>
<th>11) What is the best context for education of Christian and pastoral counsellors?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>female No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian counselor</td>
<td>Pastoral counsellor</td>
<td>less than 5</td>
<td>5-10</td>
<td>more than 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychodynamic approach (Psychoanalysis)</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rational-Emotional Behavioural Therapy (REBT)</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Person-Centred Therapy (Client-Centred Approach – Rogerian)</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gestalt Therapy</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existential Therapy</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brief Solution-Focused Therapy</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>2.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systemic Family Therapy</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>3.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative Therapy</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cybernetics of Psychotherapy</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constructivist Psychotherapy</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biblical Counselling</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sample size</td>
<td>Client</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table Q12. T-test, comparison of means
By using the z-test shown in Table 13 for column proportions, the percentage is compared to those who rated the importance of each approach, method, technique or theory of counselling as 4 or 5 across various groups of respondents (top-2). This indicated which groups of counsellors prefer which approach. The limitation of this particular application is that to a certain extent sample proportions can be misleading because they represent precisely that, a sample of the analysed population.

At a 10% significance level, male respondents named significantly more often, constructivist psychotherapy and Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) as very important or most important. rational-emotive behavioural therapy (REBT) is significantly more popular among those who prefer not to describe their occupation as Christian counsellor.

Existential therapy is more popular among the most experienced counsellors than among those with 5-10 years of experience. Gestalt and brief solution-focused therapies are more popular among those who think that academic institutions provide the best context for the education of Christian and pastoral counsellors. Use of classification trees\(^5\) aimed to detect the relationship of narrative therapy to other approaches. The advantage of classification and

---

regression trees, compared to traditional hypothesis testing, is that they automatically search for groups of respondents that are different with respect to the variable of interest, thus providing us with useful and significant results.

By exploring which groups of counsellors have the highest and lowest probability of finding narrative therapy important (4 or 5 points), 24% of respondents found it important. The highest proportion is among those who use brief solution-focused therapy (64%). The lowest proportion was among the users of cognitive-behavioural therapy who do not find brief solution-focused therapy important.

Therefore narrative therapy is strongly associated positively with brief solution-focused therapy and strongly associated negatively with cognitive-behavioural therapy.

![Chart Q3. Narrative therapy in relation to other therapies](image)

Chart Q3. Narrative therapy in relation to other therapies

When considering the ratings given to narrative therapy, some association between gestalt therapy and narrative therapy is detected. Those who indicated the importance of gestalt therapy (3, 4 or 5 points) gave a significantly higher rating to narrative therapy than those who evaluated the importance of gestalt therapy as relatively low (3.2 vs. 2.2).
Chart Q4. Narrative therapy in relation to Gestalt therapy

No differences were found in the adoption of narrative therapy in different groups of respondents based on demographic information or answers to any other questions. Therefore this method is not specific to a certain demographic group of counsellors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approach or theory of counselling used the most in counsellor practice (other than the fourteen specified)</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Rated (1 – not important, 2 – important, 3 - neither important nor unimportant, 4 - very important, 5 – most important)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotionally Focused Therapy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5,5,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trauma Therapy, Trauma Focused Therapies, Trauma informed practice</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4,5,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACT</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4,2, not given</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Process Therapy, IPT</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychodynamic psychotherapy, counselling</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incarnational Counselling</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neuropsychotherapy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systemic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transactional Analysis</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypnotherapy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sensorimotor Psychotherapy</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refocussing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focusing Therapy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Method or technique in counselling</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Rated (1 – not important, 2 – important, 3 - neither important nor unimportant, 4 - very important, 5 – most important)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mindfulness</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4, not given, not given</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential, Experiential (emotional awareness)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensitivity to the Holy Spirit</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insight</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anger Management</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medication</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Descriptive answers**

"I work eclectically," "Eclectic - a bit of everything," "Eclectic mixture of therapies & biblical principles applied in a client-centred manner," "Collection of modalities with underlying/overt Biblical perspective."

| Neuroscience/Interpersonal Neurobiology | 1 | 2 |

---

6 Acceptance and Commitment Therapy.
The qualitative answers to question six in Table Q14 reveal that the most missed category was “eclectic” use of therapy approaches. Four people (8%) added it as “the most important” rate. Three groups of three respondents (6%) also added the following three approaches: emotional focused therapy; various trauma therapies; and ACT (acceptance and commitment therapy). Two respondents (4%) insisted on strict terminology and added “psychodynamic psychotherapy” and “psychodynamic counselling” although “psychodynamic approach (psychoanalysis)” was among fourteen offered. Two respondents added “Incarnational counselling.” Under “methods or techniques” the most frequently added is “mindfulness,” three times (6%), and then twice (4%) “Experiential – emotional awareness.”

One respondent corrected the text under question 6/8 “Systemic Family Therapy” and wrote “Systems Theory,” rating it with number 4. Also under question 6/14, “Biblical Counselling” the same respondent rated the following comment number 5:

If this means working in a way that is consistent with Biblical principles/truths, i.e. passing on what I have learned from the Lord myself about the human psyche and human behaviour (and referring to the Lord, if the client has Christian faith and is looking for that).

Table Q15 presents the percentage of answers about the rationale for therapy choice (questions 7a-e), the need for personal counselling (question 9), and preferred setting for training and education of Christian counsellors (questions 10a-c).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Column N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(7a) I find them the most helpful and efficient in my practice</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>82.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>18.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7b) They fit the best to me as a person and to my personal style of counselling</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>76.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7c) They offer me the best way to integrate Christian spirituality, theology and values in counselling practice</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>68.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>32.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7d) The basic assumptions align with my personal Christian faith</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>58.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>42.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7e) The basic assumptions align with the context of contemporary life today</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>46.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>54.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(9) Personal counselling required</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>96.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10a) Academic institution (theological college, seminary, university...)</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7 Mindfulness came under the category of 'method or technique' because it is not specifically addressed by respondents as therapy, as for instance, MBCT (Mindfulness-based cognitive therapy), MiBCT (Mindfulness-integrated cognitive behavior therapy) or MBSR (Mindfulness-based stress reduction).
Table Q15. Percentage in answers to questions 7, 9 and 10

For question seven most people (82%) give preference to a therapy or approach that is helpful or effective for (in) their practice. Secondly, 76% make the choice because the therapy fits them personally or suits their style of counselling. Thirdly, 68% choose what offers them the best way to integrate Christian spirituality, theology and values in their counselling practice. Another 58% make the choice because the basic assumptions align with their personal Christian faith, and 46% because the basic assumptions align with the context of contemporary life today.

We therefore conclude that Christian counsellors favour pragmatically-based choices to theological ones. The two main preference categories of approach: efficacy and fit with personal style, are the primary reasons for integrating a particular therapy. The categories of Christian theology, spirituality, values and congruence with a personal faith come after that.

Some respondents added qualitative answers to question seven as presented below in Table Q16.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main reasons respondents use approaches chosen in question 6 (other than specified)</th>
<th>Main characteristic</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I use whatever theories, techniques or tools that enhance the health of human psyche as I understand God has designed it.” “I find my clients cannot all be assisted with the same style so I take bits and pieces out from many styles and attempt to mould them into something that fits with my client.” “Using an organised eclectic model...” “I am continually looking to ground my work in better understanding of the body, soul, relational and spiritual contexts and different emphases arise in time.”</td>
<td>Eclectic approach according to God’s design.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Clients need different approaches at different times.” “...most of these are used at various times depending on the needs of the client; while some are used less or not at all with others.” “I want to be relevant to non-Christians ... with an openness to address spirituality.”</td>
<td>Difference in client’s needs</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“They work!” “They work best for the client and that’s who we are working for. It’s not about the workers and their needs it’s what changes people for their benefit.” “Lack of proficiency in other areas.”</td>
<td>Efficiency</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I am a volunteer counsellor in a pro-life Pregnancy centre and often see clients over a short time span.”</td>
<td>Deficiency</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Applicable to my model (AIFC Family Therapy Model).”</td>
<td>Fits to personal work model</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table Q16. Qualitative answers to question 7/f
Once again, as seen earlier in Table Q14, the emphasis is upon an eclectic counselling approach. Another aspect emphasised is sensitivity to client needs with a consequent adjustment for non-Christian clients. Approach, efficiency and fit to personal working style are again highlighted. Classification trees for question seven detected which preferred approaches to counselling are associated with which reasons for using them. It can be seen that if the author of an educational course on counselling wanted to present 4 approaches that cover the largest number of counsellors, narrative therapy would be one of the methods.

82% of respondents report that the reason why they prefer certain counselling methods is because they find them the most helpful and efficient in their practice. However, among those who find gestalt therapy very important or most important the proportion is higher - 94%, while among others - only 63%. The highest proportion of those finding their techniques helpful and efficient is among those who find gestalt therapy somewhat important (ratings 3-5) and at the same time find biblical counselling not very important (ratings 1-2).

On average, 76% of respondents said that the reason why they prefer certain counselling methods is because they fit best to them as a person and to their personal style of counselling. However, among those who find biblical counselling important this proportion (50%) is much lower than among those who do not use this approach (86%). This reflects the earlier finding that Christian counsellors chose counselling approaches primarily on efficacy and a personal
style match rather than for ‘Christian’ reasons. Here, however, we see that for those favouring Biblical counselling the choice preference is actually the opposite.

Other classification trees presented below are similarly interpreted and demonstrate that certain reasons are more characteristic of counsellors who choose certain methods. Chart Q7 shows that 68% of respondents choose counselling approaches based on the best way of integrating Christian spirituality and theology. Yet among those who prefer REBT this percentage is lower (62%) than that of those with other preferences.

Chart Q8 shows how those who prefer narrative therapy (i.e., with 4 or 5 points out of 5) much more frequently choose that counselling approach because it aligns with their Christian faith (in 86% of cases), which is much more often than those who rated the importance of narrative therapy lower (i.e., 1-3 points). The latter choose their counselling approach for this reason in only 47% of cases.

This seems to indicate that narrative therapy is chosen because it aligns with personal Christian faith. Chart Q9 shows that those who prefer narrative therapy choose it more often (79%) than those with no such preference (33%) because it aligns with the context of contemporary life today, yet another reason to choose narrative therapy.
Question eight explored the structure, emphasis and percentages of different training and education fields.

Learning about the theories of counselling and psychotherapy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
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<td>8.3</td>
<td>8.3</td>
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<td>30.8</td>
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<td>16.67</td>
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<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
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<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>30</td>
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<tr>
<td>32.6%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>42.3</td>
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Table Q17. Evaluation of educational emphasis on theories of counselling and psychotherapy

Learning about the practical skills, methods and techniques in counselling

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<th>Frequency</th>
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<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
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<td>7</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>40.3</td>
</tr>
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<td>7</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

Table Q18. Evaluation of educational emphasis on practical skills, methods and techniques in counselling

Table Q17 shows that the majority of respondents spend between 20-30% of learning time on theories of counselling and psychotherapy (51%). Table Q18 shows that for 20-30% of educational time, respondents prefer learning about practical skills, methods and techniques (41.2%). An additional 14.3% of respondents prefer 40% of the educational time and 16.3% of respondents allocate 50% of that time to this topic. This reveals that respondents place a greater emphasis on learning practical rather than theoretical aspects of counsellor education.

Practicing counselling with other participants

<table>
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<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
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<td>22.8</td>
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Table Q19. Evaluation of educational emphasis on practicing counselling with other participant

Practicing counselling with outside clients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
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</table>

Table Q20. Evaluation of educational emphasis on practicing counselling with outside clients

Table Q19 reveals that the majority of respondents (34.7%) suggest 10 hours of practising counselling with other participants while the other 32.6% suggest 20-25 hours. Table Q20 shows that 22.9% of respondents recommend 10 hours of practice with outside clients during...
the course of study where another 45.9% suggest 20-30 hours. Around 6% (last two tables) and 12% (first two tables) of respondents will give equal time to all four fields. Seventeen respondents in Table Q21 also added some numerical values yet without explanation. A smaller percentage added learning elements such as: supervision, learning about God, biblical knowledge and Jesus’ way of counselling, integration of therapies with Christian theology, working through personal issues and developing self-awareness, and a pastoral counselling training emphasis on practice rather than theory.

Table Q21. Other fields or aspects of counsellor’s education

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Field</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Valid Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
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</thead>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
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<td>6.0</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
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<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 - Learning about God, His word &amp; ways, &amp; growing as a disciple</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50 - Professional</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.34% a) Other elements (integrating therapies with Christian Theology)</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 – Professional journals/texts</td>
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<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biblical knowledge – Jesus method of counselling 3%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think pastoral counsellors would have less emphasis on theory more on practice</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Question nine explored the need for personal counselling during counsellor education and a very high percentage of respondents (96%) deemed it necessary (Table Q15). This firmly established truth or “taken-for-granted” knowledge about the need for personal counselling in a contemporary counsellor’s education is expressed here statistically. Thus from a narrative point of view, “narrative self” is something that is created or constructed continuously as new stories unfold new experiences.

Questions for “professional” counsellors emerge: What needs attention through personal counselling if personal stories change according to new experiences, contexts and audiences? How much of that “treatment” is enough for someone to be graded as “expert,” when does it
end, and who is to say when? From answers to question 10 in Table Q15 it can be seen that Christian counsellors significantly prefer academic institutions as education settings (57.1%), or Christian organisations specialised in practical training (53.1%) for a Church context (2.0%).

Special note: The following additional qualitative answers to the open-ended question 10d in Table Q22 are noted in full text as they illuminate the diversity of response. A combination of educational settings such as academic institutions and Christian organisations is suggested, with appreciating individual needs and emphasis on the quality of the skills taught.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is the best context for education of Christian and pastoral counsellors (besides those specified in 10a-c)?</th>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Frequency (n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• “A combination of the above. Academia is needed but can take people away from the core of Christian integration and growth so Christians often need something else.”</td>
<td>Combination of settings</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Academic, supported by practical involvement in Christian organisation or church.”</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Combination of a &amp; b.” (academic institution and Christian specialised organisation)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Would depend on the individual.</td>
<td>Individual needs</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “The important thing is the quality of the skills taught. There are RTOs around (e.g., St Mark’s RTO, NSW) which teach counselling skills brilliantly. Doesn’t have to be a Tertiary institution, though for recognition in the field, a Degree is more useful than a Diploma or Adv Dip which, I think, is the highest qualification that an RTO can award. But a lower-level body can teach skills equally well.”</td>
<td>Quality of education</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table Q22. Qualitative answers to question 10/d

Question eleven focuses on the core training and faith elements for Christian and pastoral counsellors in comparison with solely secular models. The answers are categorised in Tables Q23-Q28.

Later interviews explored training (skills), education (information) and formation (personal process and faith journey). Because all three aspects overlap and intertwine in an educational setting it is impossible to separate “clear” categories where learning some therapy skill could be performed without giving information and without some formational effect on the student.

Therefore, the categorization which follows, to use narrative language, has the primary purpose of “mapping” and “scaffolding” rather than a final "defining."

Primary training elements are shown in the Table Q23. Respondents argued mainly for: practice outside of the student group or educational setting (3); supervision (3); learning specific counselling practices (3); and skills practice within the student group (2).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice category</th>
<th>Response example</th>
<th>Frequency (n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practice outside student group</td>
<td>“…practical experience outside the institution…”</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Practicing counselling with outside clients - 200hrs counselling.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“As a trainee, provide Christian counselling settings to enable students to practice and apply interventions, it is important. Collaborate with different churches to enable students to provide services and help to Christian clients.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>“…group supervision.”</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Understanding and importance of Supervision.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“…50 hours supervision.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning specific practices</td>
<td>“Learning about different styles and techniques available is very important as is strong active listening skills and advanced empathy.”</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“…listening and questioning skills, motivational interviewing…”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Learning about the practical skills, methods and techniques in counselling.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice in student group</td>
<td>“Practising counselling with other students and external clients is important in that order – counselling internal clients (students) allows tutors/trainers the unique insight into how the counsellor is going, as well as providing a safe place for counsellor and client (if issues arise they can be attended to as swiftly and carefully as possible).”</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Practicing counselling with other participants.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table Q23. Suggested practical elements in the Christian and pastoral counsellor’s training

Primary educational elements are presented in Tables Q24-Q27. Table Q24 describes educational elements of counselling theories. Respondents suggested learning counselling theories (3), learning particular counselling approaches (2), learning critical thinking (1) and including some medical knowledge (1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Counselling theories category</th>
<th>Response example</th>
<th>Frequency (n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning counselling theories</td>
<td>“Depends on age. I was required to do four units of theology which, at age 50+, felt like an imposition. I would have preferred to spend the time learning more about theory of personality. Others found theology helpful.”</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Counselling theories.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Learning about the theories of counselling and psychotherapy.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning particular approaches</td>
<td>“Interpersonal Therapy”</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“…variety of instructors/lecturers who practise and teach various modalities…”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning critical thinking</td>
<td>“Understanding the concept of worldview. The concepts of critical thinking.”</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical knowledge</td>
<td>“To learn about brain development, the impact of trauma on the brain, pathology and when to refer…”</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table Q24. Suggested educational elements in counselling theory

Most respondents argued for integration of theology and counselling theory and practice (16), then for learning Christian perspectives (13) and sound biblical teachings (12). Theological
elements are strongly emphasised, understandable given the structure of question eleven which explores the specific of Christian counselling training in comparison to solely secular models. It may sound like a leading question yet its purpose was to explore theological aspects in more depth. The selected quotations below are deliberately extensive as this is a significant data point.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theological core elements in a counsellor’s education</th>
<th>Frequency (n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Category</strong></td>
<td><strong>Response example</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration of theology and counselling theory and practice</td>
<td>“Knowledge of counselling theories and integration with faith (this is an ongoing journey).”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Integration of faith and practice.” (x 4)⁸</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Learning theories, techniques and tools in a context where they can be examined for their fit and value to Christian counselling would be ideal. I would have appreciated more of that kind of discussion during my training and I would appreciate it now.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Comparison of secular models against Christian models.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Integrating personal faith system with chosen modalities. Broad understanding of other faith systems. Broad understanding of major social issues in current society and how to position oneself as counsellor when considering/facing such issues. Being able to integrate one’s faith system in multi-cultural contexts with respect for other cultures being held as of great importance... Spiritual maturity, emotional maturity, balanced experiential theology.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Psychology and Christianity integration.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Biblical Studies with Psychology and Counselling Models and Practice.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Aligning secular models with scriptural principles and utilising the best of them.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“… should compose a significant element of “unlearning” of core assumptions about the relationship between emotional and “spiritual” issues. I have experienced a view in the church that emotional issues are a “spiritual problem” – just fall into line and obey the Bible. This is just incorrect, … I think, still widely held. … The skills taught in a secular and a Christian institution will be very similar and equally helpful to clients. However, an opportunity to learn more of God, wholeness and healing vs “obey and get the victory” is essential for Christians who are would-be practitioners.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Core elements are: 1) an analysis of the philosophical assumptions behind the theories of the person of the self, change, and relationship and a consideration of how they line up with Scripture; 2) Analysis of the practices of therapy and the role of the counsellor, including the dynamics of power and knowledge, and how these line up with Scripture.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Theology and the place of Scripture and prayer in counselling.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Regular opportunities to compare their worldview against psychological and theological theories and consider the implications of each of these to their contexts.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Contextualising assumptions in psychotherapies in relation to Biblical truth.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Practitioners need to understand that God has created men and women as masterpieces in His own image (Genesis 1:27, Psalm 139:13-16) consisting of body, soul and spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23) which, although discrete entities, nevertheless impinge upon one another. Accordingly, our approach needs to be holistic. In the realm of mood disorders (I specialise), the best management practice for depression is often psychotropic medication for neurochemical imbalances, psychotherapy for root causes/poor cognition and spirituality to encourage the client to embrace those...”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

⁸ Exact expression - mentioned four times
spiritual tools available to them in a grace-directed rather than a guilt-driven environment.”

- “Lack of self-awareness is connected to lack of other-awareness and lack of God-awareness so there needs to be a lot of reflection, bringing personal experience, contexts and Scripture into continual interaction.”
- “Power of God is CENTRAL; involves the whole person – spirit, soul, body; use of psychotherapy, systemic family therapy, experiential, cognitive and strategic therapies by applying attending, respect, empathy, genuineness, self-disclosure, concrete-ness, challenging and immediacy.”

Christian perspective

- “Christian Perspective of Family Systems”
- “Being a Christian counsellor with a Christian world and life view.”
- “Critical self-reflection on own belief system and how to separate ourselves from client worldview. How to work in a secular environment and maintain personal ethics beliefs etc. Understanding science from a Christian worldview.”
- “Understanding mental health in a Christian context.”
- “Application of redemptive truth.”
- “Christian Counselling using prayer and scripture be offered within the clear context of the workplace and client needs.”
- “Christians need a functional understanding of world religions and the diversity of the wider church, as these are critical contexts in which interpretation occurs.”
- “Focus on the Divine and the Holy Spirit.”
- “Exegesis.”
- “Inter-faith communication, community development.”
- “Spirituality in the counselling room - importance of the Holy Spirit in counselling room.”
- “Faith and spiritual supervision.”
- “Worldviews vs Christian values, Christian counselling framework.”

Biblical teaching

- “Biblical Counselling, Biblical understanding of Grace”
- “Solid theological and biblical grounding.”
- “Gifts of the Holy Spirit: Encouragement etc.”
- “A biblical worldview with emphasis on the fact that we are created in God’s image and we are called to be Jesus to others.”
- “Applying Biblical principles in a hostile environment.”
- “A good foundational understand of the Bible, undergirded by theological studies.”
- “…development of one’s biblical worldview…”
- “Have a clear understanding of Christian faith,bible knowledge and interpretation.”
- “Framework of the Bible. Some basic theology – e.g. Grace, forgiveness, Biblical perspective of who God is, our identity in Christ.”
- “Biblical counselling theories.”
- “Biblical Theology, Theology, Psychology and Spirituality, Fruitful living – a victorious Christian life.”
- “A solid understanding of basic Christian/Biblical doctrines - how such doctrines apply in our lives – not just theoretically. Basic counselling skills in communication and care. Advanced counselling skills to respond to complex issues from that Biblical understanding. An understanding about how humanistic psychology is underpinned – i.e., centrality of self and the futile search for happiness in separation from God. Training and developmental personal awareness and professed faith acknowledging Christ as Saviour such that future hope, present love and healing through grace has been achieved by God. Training in the concept of personal sacrifice out of faith in a loving and righteous God …”

Table Q25. Suggested theological elements in education

Table Q26 shows educational principles that call for integrity in teaching (4), non-judgmental and inclusive training without discrimination (2), applying theological principles in education (2), and a supportive stand towards expression of the counsellor’s personal values (1).
Table Q26. Distinguished educational principles

Table Q27 suggests learning about ethics and legal issues with counselling ethics (6), then Christian ethics (2), and professionally accredited and recognised training (1).

Table Q27. Elements of ethics and legal issues in education

Primary formational elements emphasise elements of the personal faith journey (8), ongoing commitment to personal growth (5), recommended counselling during the course of study (4), and the important element of therapeutic relationship (1).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Response example</th>
<th>Frequency (n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Personal faith journey    | ● “...Close relationship with God, inviting the divine into the space.”  
● “...trainee and practising counsellors learning to ‘hear deeply from the Lord’ in our own life circumstances ... so we understand how life and faith fit together and can work authentically with those who also want to change. So much of Christian teaching focuses on the ‘head,’ I am advocating that we learn how to engage with both the ‘head’ and the ‘heart’ in our own lives so we understand how real change takes place and can promote it in others’ lives.”  
● “The foundation of our Christian faith and how that translates into practical daily living.”  
● “A clear commitment to Christian faith and service, exemplified in life and practice.”  
● “Exploration of own beliefs and prejudices and own limits.”  
● “In Christian resources also are rich understandings available for being made in God’s Trinitarian image, how to do relationship better and how to be centred in God. ... connect personal experience more richly to God and to Scripture or cannot be a resource or a wise interpreter as [we] encounter these elements in the experience of others.”  
● “Abilities to rely on God!”  
● “…gentle challenges to expand the faith level and reliance on Jesus (it is through Him that true healing can be achieved in counselling).” | 8             |
| Commitment to personal growth | ● “…learning about yourself, safety...”  
● “…commitment to personal growth...”  
● “…empathy, self-care.”  
● “The integration of the person is a core element to counselling. A person can know all the theory but not integrate this practice in their own lives and therefore counselling becomes something I do, and I believe it needs to be who I am.”  
● “Self-awareness of a counsellor’s own self and world constructs.” | 5             |
| Receiving counselling     | ● “Receiving counselling themselves from a Christian counsellor that would help them to understand themselves emotionally and well as spiritually to apply what they have learned from to their clients.”  
● “…include a very practical approach – being trained by counsellors with appropriate teaching qualifications, who can recognise students who may have unreconised unidentified unresolved issues that may cause an ethical problem when counselling internal and external clients.”  
● “…involve challenges to attend to unresolved issues and know ourselves at a deeper level.”  
● “Knowledge base is important but experience with experienced practitioners would be of great benefit.” | 4             |
| Therapeutic relationship  | ● “Offering themselves in the therapeutic relationship (and not losing themselves).” | 1             |

Table Q28. Elements of personal growth and faith journey

Table Q29 presents additional comments on the open-ended question twelve. Respondents: emphasised the primacy of God in Christian counselling; contextualised their answers within the difference between Christian and pastoral counselling “categories;” accentuated Scripture as the most efficient integrating factor of any counselling theory; marked influence of the counsellor’s personality on counselling; recommended more practice in training and adjusting the teaching to postmodern society; expressed personal conflict with Narrative therapy “assumptions” yet not with “technique,” and highlighted the Holy Spirit’s role and miracle in counselling”
Emphasis on God in Christian counselling

“I haven’t had any training or PD in the narrative approach but understand it as a method of de-personalising problem/s and creating a new narrative so the person is not defined by the problem/s. I’m hoping to do some PD so I understand the method better however my general thought is that most theories have some merit. ‘Bits and pieces’ can weave their way into our practice but the basic difference between a Christian and secular counsellor is that the Christian counsellor starts and ends with God. As Christian counsellors, I think we primarily need to know our God, what He has to say about us humans and how we are to live. We can’t do that without spending time with Him in His Word listening to what He says as we live life.”

Difference of Christian and pastoral counselling categories

“I have only commented on Christian counselling training. I think pastoral counselling is a different category.”

Counsellor’s personality influence

“I have been involved in tertiary education, a Bible Institute, a Christian college and a theological college, for most of my career. I have been educating Christians who are looking more toward general ministry and also those with a more counselling focus. I have found myself drawn more towards Scripture as the integrating factor rather than any of the particular theories. There are valuable aspects in them all but all fall short.”

Scripture as an integrating factor

“Who the counsellor is, is more important than what they know, and what they know is crucial. When a counsellor doesn’t know what they don’t know they become dangerous through ignorance.”

More practice in training and adjusting teaching to postmodern society

“I like the Narrative model, although I do not use it. Perhaps this is because of the lack of training in this model. I also use the Emotionally Focused Therapy model for Couple Counselling, which I find very effective; but I am self-taught. Also, there needs to be more training on Trauma Therapy and Anger Management. Some of the theories I was taught when I did my degree are no longer applicable in Postmodern society. Counselling training needs to have a greater emphasis on practice and less on theory, though this too is important.”

Counsellor’s conflict with Narrative therapy aspects

“I was not equipped in skills in narrative therapy in my course. I do not accept underlying assumptions of the therapy, but the technique seems to be effective. I am interested in attaining training in this therapy in the future.”

Miracle in counselling and narrative as “just talking”

“Needs to be kept simple as the holy spirit does not take 12 months to heal us so why should counselling go on for session after session. This just colludes with secular beliefs that miracles can’t happen. Best to teach people why they’re in the job and what our role is rather than how we do things as people make ill about them self and defend themselves and their person favourite therapies. Need to move past this.”

Table Q29. Respondent’s additional comments

Question thirteen had nine responses. Five respondents left contact details and expressed readiness to be interviewed. However, because the survey was concluded with twelve months’ delay (ten months waiting for permission plus two months applying the questionnaire) it was, within planned research dynamics, too late to continue with additional interviews to the seventeen already done. Three respondents declined because they lacked narrative therapy skills, knowledge, training or experience. One response was simply “No.”

The following section specifically addresses the interviews.
THE INTERVIEWS

4.2 Interview research questions and main categories from data analysis

(Note: Unusually large sections of raw data are noted below. This researcher believes this honours the respondent, their words, the narrative process and the validity of their ideas. Their words are ‘living’ explications of theory, integration and practice. Some shorter quotes are indented for the same reason.)

Interviews covered three main areas.

How is narrative therapy (approach, ideas, stories) integrated with your practice in a pastoral setting and are Christian values, spirituality or theology expressed?

Can you identify something specific that you use in your practice when working with Christian believers or in a Christian setting?

What are the core elements of narrative theory and practice that might constitute a part of training, education, and formation for future Christian and pastoral carers and counsellors?

The first question focused only on narrative therapy, but then it became obvious how understanding and application of narrative practices revealed much more variety than originally thought. Therefore, expanding the question on narrative approaches to embrace ideas, or even just working with stories, seemed a logical option.

Three main research areas and interview questions also guided the construction of preliminary categories for data distribution:

1) Category: Integration – of narrative practices and stories with Christian values, spirituality and theology.
2) Category: Specific use – of narrative practices and stories in a Christian and pastoral care and counselling context.
Of the seventeen interviewees, five were male and twelve female. A wide diversity of work and/or ministry contexts characterise the participant group. Three interviewees are simultaneously involved in ministry and counselling, six are now or previously have been engaged in teaching counselling. Three interviewees teach narrative practices. Two are social workers and four are members of CCAA Victoria. Two are presently enrolled in, or have just finished a Masters in Narrative Therapy and Community Work, through Melbourne University and the Dulwich Centre, Adelaide. Four counsellors specialise in working with children and youth. Three counsellors work in a secular setting only, three in both secular and Christian settings, and eleven in various church or parachurch contexts, from counselling centres to specialised services. Two interviewees use narrative therapy exclusively.

Interviews ran from February to May 2015, and each was recorded on both a digital Dictaphone and a smartphone voice recorder. Names have been changed but noted after quotes to reflect a personalised and appreciative narrative therapy way of reporting conversations.

In each section the raw data are presented first, followed by tables and data interpretation. This structure offers the reader a chance to form his or her independent ‘reading’ of the text and provides this researcher’s summary and interpretation. Data from all three research phases – questionnaire, interviews and focus group - are summarised and interpreted, then woven together with a common theme.

4.2.1. Integration – of narrative practices and stories with Christian values, spirituality and theology

Four subcategories emerged in this category:
1. Integrational aspects of personal, professional and spiritual journey.
2. Integration of narrative practices and ideas in counsellor practice.
3. Integration of Narrative therapy concepts with philosophy and theology.
4. Specific integrational aspects.
   a) Narrative therapy and other approaches.
   b) The use of parallel stories.
   c) Debatable integrational aspects for Christian contexts.
Each subcategory will be presented in tables summarising the main characteristics and with examples of interviewee response.

4.2.1.1 Integrational aspects of the personal, professional and spiritual journey

Lilly suggested that counsellors meet a “wide variety of people ... with all sorts of backgrounds, religious and non-religious” and they have “to learn how to be at peace with all of them.” She observed that this spiritual integration is a slow journey with constant learning where questions, while challenging to others, affirm there are different ways of believing and “different ways of saving.” For Mia “the Christian story” is motivational for counselling, also the Christian teaching that people are made in the image of God, that God is concerned with all people and that Jesus reaches out to the marginalised, the sick, and the sad. All of these stories are really foundational for me - studying and putting myself out to help someone else.

Charlotte, besides embracing traditional psychology, “wanted to learn about what other cultures believe in.” This led her “beyond the Christian framework” which informed her and her early life story. She can “learn from so many more wisdom traditions” which actually meld and integrate beautifully, and can be used as “different tools from those areas of wisdom.” For her there is no conflict with Christianity “because it’s all based on unconditional love of self and the other.” This integrative process is illustrated in Ethan’s story below, presented in its entirety.
Ethan reflects on this integrative process.

**Ethan’s integration**

Narrative is more a metaphor than a theory and the advantage of a metaphor is you can play with it .... really important is a notion that narratives are actually embedded in metanarratives. ... the person’s own biological narrative ... the narrative of the history of the family ... the narrative of the culture ... the metanarrative which is like the world view, that whole cultural history upon which our sense of ethnic identity is based. The ultimate narrative is ... the God narrative, the salvation story. Every culture has its metanarratives, which we describe as myths, which is the big story that actually our worldviews are based on.

The Christian metanarrative, ... the story of God creating Adam and Eve, the history of Israel, the story of Jesus, then the story of the Church and then my story is nested within that, and in a sense interacts with that story ... we draw themes in the way we interpret that story; the main themes become dominant. Out of that metanarrative ... our personal theology is formed. The notion of storytelling our existence is something which Christians do. The metaphor readily fits into the Christian theological framework ... one particular grand narrative.

When you operate within a multi-cultural context you also have people who have the different grand-narratives and the way that they interact with them. So, that's an obvious basis of integration, right? So that you relate your own story to the God story, ... the notion of authorship in the sense that narrative therapy is very empowering, because it posits the person as the author of his or her own story. ... you can actually take that notion of 'sensus plenior,' of innocence, God authoring the grand story, but also being the author of our story, on one level, with us being the author of our story and our faith journey story on another. So you have this common notion of authorship, our engagement with God is this dual authorship dynamic. God is both authoring his journey and his story - we are drawn up as a participant but it's a story that's larger than our own. I am authoring my own story and I have a responsibility for how I actually story my life ... now and moving into the future ... I have the ability to edit the story that is already there. I can re-edit it in terms of reworking the themes, changing the perspectives, shifting from a problem-saturated narrative into an empowering narrative. I can also be the editor of how I actually story my life history with reference to the interpretation of facts and events. So there's a lot of integration which operates seamlessly within the narrative. ... narrative therapy is more of a metaphor than a theory and as a metaphor it's very versatile.

For Charlotte, stories from earlier years are now inadequate because we live in multicultural societies with “a huge, changing, shifting paradigm” and “a changing story in the world” so we have to find out “how to be synchronised in relation to work and everyday life.”

Jack “specifically intends to integrate narrative” as a counsellor and as a Christian minister. His first encounter with narrative ideas “was a bit of a struggle” because he saw it as a “specific set of skills” whereas now is is “much more an owned view, a philosophy.” Jack sees himself “very much embedded” within a philosophy that “flows through everything” he does, even using other counselling techniques such as CBT within a narrative framework.
Jessica “was very anxious ... at the beginning because narrative therapy is descriptive and multi-storied” and “I couldn’t see the forest for the trees.” How she uses “the word ‘therapy’ it is a system like any other system” and she is actually “much more comfortable with using the word ‘narrative practices.’”

Jessica integrates “core narrative principles and practices” about multi-storiedness and privileged story without necessarily practicing “narrative therapy” and explains integration as her own “personal journey” of spirituality and the storying of her family and personal insecurities. Jessica is a curious researcher of her own life, and narratives provide “a very loose scaffolding” for her, “not to be an expert but a little thing ... to step on and to find the next thing.” Because she is never “sure what [she’s]sure about ... I can make that into my own framework.” This curiosity and research of her own life moved her “from a particular closed system of thinking in church to more contemplative spirituality, going to silence, meaning, other people,” experimenting with “drama, and movement, defining language and expression and meaning.” She didn’t feel “expert enough to understand narrative” until she allowed “some of these practices to inform” her without being an “expert in practicing them.” We can have “more mature conversations about narrative practices” when we are “done with our own stories,” and thus become “freer” and “less defensive.”

For Olivia, like Lilly, integration does not come out of “where it fits” with her faith, but more as an outcome of her own spiritual journey. In her practice Isabella “just gets on with that” without actually thinking about integrating it. Like Jack, she sees narrative therapy as “a way of being” where we cannot “separate the ideas from the practice of narrative therapy.” Isabella integrates narrative practices by centering the client, using a non-judgmental stand and listening to the client’s problem story while deliberately not taking “a stand on their problem.”

This, Isabella explains, emerges from her “way of being.”

I think that’s thoughtful in my life to be generalising that way of being. ... It’s a respectful way of being where I don’t assign motives and psychopathology or both to people.

---

9 Jessica apologized for this terminology which she describes as psychotherapy “shortcuts.”
This following table reviews personal, professional or spiritual themes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aspect</th>
<th>Characteristic of integration as personal, professional and/or spiritual journey</th>
<th>Used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Personal | • Integration is a slow and continuous process. (Lilly)  
• Integration embraces wisdom from other cultures. (Charlotte)  
• Integration is a developmental process. (Charlotte)  
• Recognising that in a multi-cultural context people have different grand-narratives and interact with them differently. (Ethan)  
• Acknowledging that each person has responsibility for how he or she authors and stories his or her life. (Ethan)  
• Integrating narrative practice is a way of being within and without therapy. (Isabella)  
• Integrating narrative practices through work on one’s personal story. (Jessica)  
• Integrating within one’s own personality and family history. (Jessica) | 8 |
| Professional | • Find peace with all sorts of background differences. (Lilly)  
• Appreciating the person who enters narrative conversations makes the difference. (Ruby)  
• Integrating narrative view and philosophy rather than a set of skills. (Jack)  
• Integrating narrative as a metaphor rather than a theory. (Ethan)  
• View narratives as embedded in metanarratives. (Ethan)  
• Integrating through just practice rather than theory. (Isabella) | 6 |
| Spiritual | • Integration comes out of the spiritual journey. (Jessica, Olivia)  
• Asking questions instead of accepting established “truths” may make integration difficult in a traditional theological setting. (Lilly)  
• A variety of theologies, beliefs and spiritualties may assist integration. (Lilly)  
• Finding motivation in Christian story and experience. (Mia)  
• Establishing priority of the Christian truth that the ultimate narrative is the God narrative. (Ethan) | 6 |

**Table I. Characteristics of integration as personal, professional and/or spiritual journey**

**4.2.1.2 Integration of narrative practices and ideas in the counsellor’s practice**

For Lilly, metaphor is “a very strong tool” in puzzling out “different ways to work with people” as some who are not into Christian stories might grasp metaphors. She highlighted counsellor curiosity and that people are the experts of their own stories. She is not “just a sole narrative therapist” but “fuss the edges a little bit” (i.e., eclectic exploration) where “sometimes you just need to help people pan for the gold which is a Michael White thing.” She referred to the issue of ‘truth’ saying that “the context of the time and the season of someone’s life would direct the truth.” If there is early trauma then their story will be in the context of that trauma and “that’s their truth at the time” where a “few years later that story changes with more input.” Lilly “takes it slowly” waiting for a person’s permission “to enter into something else,” saying:

I’m not here for people to walk away feeling that they are wrong. I validate people’s belief systems, especially if they are life-giving.
Another of Lilly’s integrational aspects describes the “thickening” of stories:

The stories become thickened by Biblical input, by your theological input, by your heart input, by your grace, and therefore enrich people’s lives. Even your own.

Ruby appreciates the way narrative therapists talk through people’s pain, suffering and despair, trying to separate the problem from the person who is “a precious gift to others.” This “fits in so well with our Christian principles” and community work approaches like Tree of Life. Because each “person is expert of their own life” it is about being “respectful,” which Ruby claims is her favourite narrative therapy word, just as in Christianity it is compassion. Narrative therapy therefore helps people “remind them what they did well in the past.” Ruby’s supervisor, holding hands cupped together, said that our “job as counsellors is to hold the hope for others till they’re ready to hold it themselves.” Ruby commented: “Now if that is not similar to the words of Jesus I don’t know what is.” Ruby finds a “circle of support” important.

In narrative therapy, we talk about the theme story, and that people have these thick problem stories and we are there to listen for the alternative story, for the story of hope, for the unique story, the one-off time when they did do it right, and grab on to that and to push that. And we are there to give them words that give them hope not put them in more despair.

Ruby mentioned using “appreciative inquiry” to enable “people to dream and to think of how to be at their best both on the individual level and on the community levels.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ruby’s example of integrating narrative practice</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michael White [had] an example he used frequently: What joy, do you think about, what joy [have you] given to others? So often when people have been through terrible, terrible hardships and horrible times they can only remember that they felt hopeless. You can sometimes help them remember when there was a little bit of support, someone's supported you and helped you at some stage. But then narrative therapy takes that extra thing that I think Jesus would ask: What joy have you given to others? Because even in those moments of complete despair sometimes when someone reaches out to you, you reach back and you actually give something back.</td>
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Chloe finds narrative concepts of externalizing quite freeing and that “ties in” with her faith “in terms of people generally being created with goodness.” Chloe uses externalizing conversations and outsider witness when trying “to strengthen somebody's self-esteem,” just as Olivia uses letter-writing to externalise themes. For Chloe there are “a lot of things that fit very well”, especially “working with stories and creating meaning and also about hope.”
Narrative therapy is very affirming. It’s very encouraging for the person. It’s looking for the rich description of people’s lives rather than thin description. ... Looking for the unique outcomes. So you’re looking for when is this not a problem. ... It is about the bigger picture which is also sort of a narrative so it’s not just a narrative of this person’s life, it’s the narrative of the culture, it’s the narrative of where they’ve come from, it’s the narrative of their family of origin.10

Chloe finds narrative “a lovely kind of concept” that “fits fine” with her faith. Re-membering practices bring people-resources into the counselling context. Mia finds that telling stories “helps to clarify the meaning as we tell the story again”, resonating with Charlotte’s comment that “lives have gift for healing rather than fixing.” Chloe looks for “energy words,” listening “for the things that have a strong resonance” saying:

That’s a subjective thing. But it’s an intersubjective11 response. So I’m listening to what they are saying and I’m trying to find the hot words, the words that jump out.

For Jack, “using narrative gives a beautiful time of storytelling and learning to accept themselves and others and being less caught up in judgements.” He emphasised integration of listening for “the potential of a unique outcome” regardless of whether you’re “doing a CBT or asking specifically narrative questions, or being Rogerian or whatever.” He notes that “more and more in my counselling I see narrative really is about unique outcomes and I almost don’t worry about much of the stuff we heard or learned earlier on.”

Narrative practice for Jack is “bouncing between the landscape of action and the landscape of meaning, and with ‘what does it say about your quality’ scaffolding it up.” Counselling is therefore a self-made narrative map where at the bottom axis of a grid I’d be talking about the landscape of action; where, who - and going up the grid I’d be talking about the landscape of meaning. However, what language do we want to use: what does it say about your qualities, your beliefs that you stand for etc. Then if you imagine the top axis ... a strength of identity, and there are qualities: How might this help you in the future? Where might you apply this to

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10 Chloe’s questions: Who is somebody who you really trust, admire and value? What do they think of you? How would they describe you? Oh, your grandma would think this? What would she say to you now in this situation?
11 Intersubjective: existing between conscious minds, shared by more than one conscious mind that somehow points to the factor of co-constructiveness which is also emphasised in later discussion about educational space.
the situation? So it’s again a landscape of action. But it’s now that future action with these qualities and understandings of self. There is new identity embedded.

Olivia integrates “the future work” by amplifying a person’s story “about the times when things happen to be different” and then focusing on “what it's like now and provide the narrative that it's about the relationship in a healthier place.” Isabella’s uses “the statement position map,” mapping the effects of the problem and asking how their values and spiritual beliefs and principles might fit for a Christian person. She finds “that’s a potential place for integration” if the client wishes. Ella sees integration as “teasing out the narrative” and “helping people to unpack their story.” Through a white board, genograms and family structures she looks for a pattern which “helps to bring out the person’s story” and integrates narratives with a “systemic way of working where you look at the person's networks and you help them to develop the story a bit more.” She also uses drawing, memory games, Duplo 12 “as they've got characters,” tactile things, and a box of treasures to remind people of something and journaling where they “will jot down things during the week and that journaling can then be part of the narrative story, a narrative helping to develop who they are, to discuss dreams, what the dreams would reflect, what sort of feelings, that sort of thing.”

Sue finds that “narrative therapy is so rich in its ideas” especially “the idea of re-membering” where “we can actually choose the members in our club of life, and therefore we can choose

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<tr>
<th>Ethan’s examples of integrating narrative practices - 1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I use narrative as a Christian counsellor: Firstly it enables me to challenge the client to take responsibility for the meanings that that person actually creates out of life. What I have found, particularly in dealing with trauma, [it’s] not the fact of the trauma that is significant, it’s the meanings that the person actually authors out of that trauma. To distinguish between the event and the meanings - the client is the author of the meanings, and therefore you're responsible for the meanings that you have authored out of your experience. But because you are also the editor, there is the opportunity in therapy to reframe this, reconstruct and develop different meanings. Because if meaning is storied and you’re the editor there is an opportunity to reframe meaning, reconstruct meaning, deconstruct meaning. So it opens up potential for therapeutic work once you realise that meaning is something which is actually negotiable. Which modern therapies simply just don’t have because they assume that meaning was a fact and therefore non-negotiable, couldn't be changed and there is not much work you can do. There’s great therapeutic potential.</td>
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12 LEGO, game for children.
who we let speak into our life.” Sue would also like to use “the idea of living multi-storied life” that is “just so powerful for all of us.”

There are a lot of different ways that you can use narrative therapy. I like that it’s very respectful and the way that it allows the person to journey along and that there can be many different ways [for] the conversation to go, and that you follow the client.

For Sue, narrative therapy “allows a person to tell their story.” In spite of Twitter and Facebook totally changing “the way people relate to each other” many people are still “really starved to have someone to listen to their story” and narrative therapy “would offer this really precious space where they get to tell their story.”

Jessica likes the word scaffolding because

for me framework means scaffolding, loose scaffolding, because you do need something to put your foot on but you don’t have to be dogmatic about it except when I actually find myself, my core values and my ethics being crossed. ... and I think narrative helps me find it.

Jessica appreciates narrative practices as “a respectful, inclusive, ethical practice” that “allows for what is” and “doesn’t close the door on something” because “it is changing the whole paradigm of how you see the human, and how you see therapy in terms of the inter-subjective space.” People need a safe, secure circle so that “stories can have a chance of thickening.” Jessica understands language very much in line with this research because for her “it’s very interesting that language is words; language is beyond words, language is art, language is silence.”

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<tr>
<th>Ethan’s examples of integrating narrative practices - 2</th>
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<tr>
<td>Something I use a lot is actually externalising the symptom. ... people often identify themselves in terms of the problems they are struggling with: I'm a depressed person; a loser; a failure; my life will never amount to anything; I'm an anxious person, always have been. And to be able to externalise the problem ... there's a popular metaphor of depression being 'the black dog' or anxiety being 'the tiger.' That can be very empowering in helping a person change their perspective. So I regularly externalise the problem in terms of sexual desire, “Mr Anxiety,” old man depression, fear, and say: Ok, you've got to work out this relationship. How you’re gonna dialogue with fear? What’s fear as a dialoguer talking or saying to you? One of the metaphors I've used is a notion of court, and on that court you've got many counsellors. You've got hope over here, God over there, fear over there, depression over there and these different counsellors are giving different sorts of advice. Now: What sorts of counsellors are you going to listen to? And: Is fear a good counsellor? What would happen if you identified fear as the one who is talking? You say: I'm not listening to you, I don't care what you say. It changes their relationship to this overwhelming thing and they find they are able to just say &quot;get lost.&quot;</td>
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Lucy uses “pretty much only narrative therapy” working with autistic students within special education where “social stories” are used to teach appropriate behaviour or “social scenarios” in which “an expected response would be versus an unexpected.” Lucy gave an example of working with an autistic boy while “using narrative questioning in creating a cartoon that externalises the problem, discusses the effects of the problem, and kind of naming the counter story that is there.”

Lucas’ view on integration emphasised the narrative idea is a philosophical way of working as far as integrating my ethical way, how I like to counsel, counselling as a commerce, and for myself as a practitioner and the people consulting you. And that fits really neatly in these ideas, a notion around narrative where I’m not seen as the expert... Initially when I integrate narrative into my practices I like to be decentred and with open curiosity, with a not-knowing approach where we’re both on the journey of co-researching and understanding behind their experiences. Good, bad and indifferent.

Lucas described integrative narrative aspects when discussing his work with trauma where the work may be “with the effects” but also with the person’s “value systems and their beliefs, and what motivates them.” He integrates the “absent but implicit” dimension by acknowledging Jesus, God, and the person’s core beliefs and values. The pastoral care “setting ideally would be great to have narrative discussions in a group” and then move “into collective action, social action against issues, whatever the issues are” that would “add to one-on-one” encounters. Lucas argues for “minimising the effects of the trauma based on what people value.”

**Ethan’s examples of integrating narrative practices - 3**

I like ... the importance of other people bearing witness. So ask the circular question: If your partner was here what would she be saying to you? Or: Has anyone actually noticed anything, made any comments that you’re changing? What have you noticed as you have done this, how have people responded? And: If they have, what is the impression that they would have gotten of you as a person as you have done this different thing? It’s a way of looking at other people’s perspectives and perceptions and what they have said as a way of reinforcing change, and what’s that say about what sort of person you are becoming, and drawing that implication of author power has been a very powerful way of actually helping to reinforce and enable a sense of change and generate momentum.
Table I2 presents the integrated “techniques” of narrative practices or other methods that the interviewed Christian and pastoral counsellors use to facilitate storytelling.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Integrated methods and techniques of narrative ideas and practices</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Used in Narrative therapy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Externalising (Chloe, Olivia, Ethan, Jessica)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Unique outcomes (Chloe, Jack, Olivia, Jessica)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Outsider witness (Chloe, Ethan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Scaffolding (Jack, Jessica)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Metaphors (Lilly)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Writing letters (Olivia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Statement position maps (Isabella)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Failure map (Isabella)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Re-membering (Sue)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Absent but implicit (Lucas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Collective narrative practices (Lucas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Used with narrative principles</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Using white board (William, Ella)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Using drama, acting, music, poetry. (Jack)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Appreciative inquiry (Ruby)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Accidental narrative (Jack)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Empty chair work – interviewing the problem (Jessica)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ‘Social story’ and ‘social scenario.’ (Lucy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Using drawing, table games, Duplo, memory games, tactile items - box of treasures, journaling, discussing dreams (Ella)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table I2. Integrated methods and techniques of narrative ideas and practices

Table I3 presents the main ideas and principles of narrative approach as integrated by interviewed Christian and pastoral counsellors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Integrated ideas and principles of narrative approach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• To be respectful with people in conversation (Ruby, Sue, Jessica, Isabella)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Counsellor looks for the rich description of people’s lives rather than thin description (Lilly, Chloe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• People are experts of their story (Lilly, Ruby)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Look at the problem, separate it out; look for the support and give people the words of hope (Ruby, Chloe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• The context of time and season direct a person’s truth (Lilly)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Counsellor validates life-giving belief systems of people (Lilly)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Counsellor works with people’s values without imposing their own (Ruby)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Personal narratives exist within the bigger context of family and cultural narratives (Chloe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Counsellor brings into conversation the supportive influence of other people (Chloe)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13 “Technique” is perhaps not the best word to use if these “techniques” are viewed outside the context of the ideas from which they emerge.
• Counsellor focuses on lived experience rather than words and explanations (William)
• Re-telling the story helps clarify the meaning (Mia)
• Non-judgmental acceptance of ourselves and others (Jack)
• Playfulness (Jack)
• Naming and externalising repeating patterns (Olivia)
• Multi-storied life (Sue)
• Narrative therapy as a precious space where people tell their stories (Sue)
• Establishing a circle of safety where stories may thicken (Jessica)
• Language is more than words (Jessica)
• It is an ethical way of work (Lucas)
• From one-to-one work to social action (Lucas)
• Be curious and explore what people think (Lilly)
• Help people ‘pan for the gold’ (Lilly)
• Wait for people’s permission to enter stories (Lilly)
• Take it slowly (Lilly)
• Talk through pain, suffering, despair by separating from the person. Praise them as a precious gift to others (Ruby)
• Amplify the story that makes a difference and connect it to the future story (Olivia)
• Challenge responsibility for the meaning and negotiate the meaning (Ethan)
• Help people unpack their story (Ella)
• Counsellor’s job is to hold the hope for others till they’re ready to hold it themselves (Ruby)
• Working with effects rather than trauma itself and with person’s value systems, beliefs and motivators (Lucas)
• Lives have a gift for healing rather than fixing (Charlotte)

Table I3. Integrated ideas and principles of narrative approach

4.2.1.3 Integration of narrative therapy concepts with philosophy and theology

Many other therapies reflect values common to Christianity, or other faith traditions, and this will be noted below. Lilly’s “fundamental belief was that everyone is made in the image of God” and each client has a “divine spark” whether “Muslim, Hindu, whatever.” That made Lilly “feel respectful of them” and their image of God as well as of the relationship. “I see Trinity in a lot of those things, in a lot of my work,” the multi-storiedness of Christianity meaning “there are many Christians.” Ruby’s narrative therapy integrates with her Christian values in Jesus’ teaching in parables “which is a type of narrative therapy.” Jesus’ teaching “to reach out to the oppressed, the poor, the sick, the lonely, the imprisoned, the stranger and to offer them comfort and compassion” is also embodied in the counsellor’s call. Counsellors “want to comfort people or bring them to a better place, help them to reach their potential or help them to work through their stories of despair to work on the story of hope” and this Ruby sees
as “the good news of Jesus Christ, and us as Christians are called to be Christ-like to follow the story of Jesus.” In counselling you consider the person and you consider their cultural background, where they come from and you consider the whole community aspect … I love the way narrative therapy says, which I think Jesus would really like, the person is not the problem, the problem is the problem.

The core value for Ruby is “loving neighbour as yourself,” so to apply narrative therapy is “just to witness, to be a compassionate person” and “it’s ok to let them know of our values in a gentle way so long as we respect their values as well as help them move forward.” Ruby says “it’s up to them what they do with that compassion and respect” yet the counsellor “encourages them to be respectful in their relationships” and “remind them to be gentle with people.” Chloe sees clients “in terms of hope, their story, them as individual beings created by God, and created in the image of God.” “Therefore,” says Chloe, “God and goodness are working within them whatever their story.” For Chloe “it’s about the story of their lives” and “to look at things in a different way and find different kinds of meaning in their lives that they might not have found before or the way that they see it.” Therefore she thinks “there are elements of Christian values of hope, change and transformation” and “guiding principles, love God, love your neighbour, love yourself.” William described narrative therapy as a lifestyle.

I don’t think postmodernism excludes it … it is totally integrated … based on being, living a lifestyle. … Because if I want to be true to what I think narrative therapy is … to choose the healthy options for your life, letting go of unhealthy options, unhealthy stories, then I need to have integrity … to live that myself and go through that struggle. And that’s what God wants us to do, to become who the potential has created within us, to actually become that healthier story.

William is “not so much in the predestination” frame because “we create history with God,” since we’re “authoring our story all the way along and authoring it with God.” He asks: “If it’s a healthy option and going towards our potential, what’s not Christian about that?” William observes that “Christians have made religion into power and control just like any other religion, and like any political group.” He sees “our faith journey” as co-creating our life story with God, or, stepping out “into that story with God,” something that is “very natural” because integration of narrative practices is “to live that and bring God’s love into it.” He explained his integration of postmodern ideas and identified what emerged as an outcome of this research.
Everybody’s truth is relative to them … it gives people freedom to have open-mindedness, to look at things and explore things in the way they want to. Isn’t that free will? Well, who created free will? God! Who created postmodernism therefore? God! We’re just putting our mindset and frames and words onto what’s already there. Narrative ‘therapy’ has been happening for thousands of years. We just write it down in different words and discover different ways of thinking about it. We don’t discover anything new.\(^\text{14}\)

William pointed out that Christians often expect others to fit into their stories and then “it’s all about my story and how I see it and there is a real arrogance that I don’t like about that.” William asks: “Who are we to say that this is God’s story?” In his theological reflections, almost all men in patriarchal societies don’t have the right picture (about God) just like we don’t. But if we put all pictures of God together, we’re gonna get closer to who God is and what God’s experience is. That’s why I don’t think we are meant to be isolated as Christians. No one human being can get even close to knowing God. Because God is too big. But all together we can have a much better idea of who God is. That’s why everybody’s experience of God is valuable and crucial.\(^\text{15}\)

While a community might actually know more about who God is than one individual, without also appreciating these individual experiences (in case they are, for instance, forced to be “unique” for the sake of community “peace”) the communal “knowledge” of God can be distorted and untrue. Jack described his experience of integrating theology and narrative:

The moment I heard about narrative therapy I felt like I was coming home. … it really touched core Christian beliefs. God loves someone and wants them to be all they can be, and narrative is about that kind of centred approach rather than me analysing someone telling him what’s wrong and what to do … social justice within narrative is so strong and helping communities recover from trauma by seeing what strengths… strengths is the wrong word, but its abilities, history they have doing that.

\(^\text{14}\) This foreshadows later discussion on language and the Tower of Babel in psychotherapy. He also described indigenous people whose “rites of passage are around stories and experience and going out and experiencing to see what your story is going to be and what you can create it to be. It’s really postmodernism and it’s a powerful tool. I get a bit frustrated when Christians get fearful about things like this.”

\(^\text{15}\) This becomes really interesting if spread to interfaith dialogue. While studying in Melbourne for three years I had various experiences of the city, the people and its life. My wife shared some of them but also had her own that I didn’t experience. Both my daughters had additional experiences and relationships different or unique to those of my wife and I. Each one of us individually knows less about Melbourne and what Melbourne “is” than if our knowledge were to be combined. The same goes for God in William’s example of multi-storiedness and dimensionality. Dimensional theology is addressed in the Discussion.
Jack’s example of postmodern theological integration with narrative ideas is somewhat similar to William’s, but adds other elements.

We always understand God through our lens. And narrative is all about that. What lenses have we got? Where do those lenses come from? How much does our community impose lenses on us that are actually destructive? What is our chosen identity? ... We seek. ... So we don’t understand God. ... We interpret God through our history. And narrative speaks to that and gives us language to help speak to that language, where people unpack that when they need to, where they are imprisoned. ... God is love, Jesus existed, but a narrative framework is: Yes! That’s true! But we only know God and Jesus through our interpretation, through our lenses.

For Olivia “narrative is taking away blame and judgement ... one reason why people become Christians is the healing power of it, to have your sins washed away or that sense of release and also opening up of hope and meaning” adding that “narrative therapy is a bit like that. There is hope, you are not stuck in one story and there are other ways to look at it, to operate your life. That’s kind of that ‘light in the tunnel.’” She finds that faith helps her not to feel like God and be responsible for others but “just a person journeying with them for that time, but most of and the rest of their life is between them and the universe, and the people around them.” Narrative therapy generally fits with Christian values in her experience because it’s being non-judgmental, the story of grace ... What are these values which we call Christian? Because if it is about judgement, and sin... you have to really get inside... you have to listen to the story of that person, because what Christianity and Christian values mean to me might be totally different to what it means to someone else. ... I suppose the challenge for me is to hold back and to allow that person to explore their own, to help them explore it. ... sometimes it is about opening doors for people.

Isabella reflected on postmodernistic integration by relating to modernism:

What about modernism doesn’t fit with Christianity? Modernism is no better a fit than postmodernism. For Christianity pre-modernism maybe, which ascribed disasters and the things that went well to God. I think modernism leaves God out of it. ... If the choice is to go with humanism as a better therapy I don’t think it’s any better a fit. Because I don’t see that people left alone like a potato in the basement will necessarily look for the light and actualise themselves. ... people look at Person-Centred Therapy and think it’s lovely and it’s Christian but it’s not. It’s very... it’s secular, it’s humanism. Now postmodernism... I really like Bowen’s work and his ideas about relationship and I’ve looked at Trinitarianism ... God as living in Trinity and being in relationship with himself and the way that that calls us ... to live and develop in community... I [am] the person who I am because of the relationships I have.
This idea of a relational self fits, I think, very well with my understanding of theology because God is the person in relation as ‘I am.’\textsuperscript{16}

Ella thinks that “to be truly Christian is to truly embrace other people and love people where they are and where they are at,” and avoid narrowing beliefs “as if to be a Christian, to define Christian, you must do a, b, c, d.” Ella referred to the passage “now we see in a mirror dimly, but later we will see face to face,” noting the end of 1 Corinthians 13 “where it talks about love,” an “integral part of Christianity” and “a Christian fundamental – loving unconditionally ... as Christian counsellors are loving those around us.”

Sue commented that “God is never alone” (meaning the Trinity) but “always in relationship” and so “we are never alone because we are relating to him.” For Sue “the concept that narrative therapy has of our identity being formed in relationship fits well with my view of who God is and who we are before God.”

Sue described her theological integration:

For me the Bible is the absolute truth and always will be, but the way the Bible is interpreted or known varies enormously. So I’m happy to sit with the fact

\textsuperscript{16} Isabella’s “relational self” requires further discussion, especially in relation to suggestions made later in this thesis about the preference of working with ‘identities’ rather than ‘selves.’
that God, Jesus and the Bible is absolute truth but the people will interpret that quite differently.

Lucy summarized her integrational aspects, concluding with the sentence that foreshadows one later conclusion of this research where as therapist or counsellor she is working to bring the person closer to their preferred way of living, and whether that’s a Christian way of living or not it doesn’t really matter. ... some Christian academics have also criticised Foucault in particular because of the ‘relative truth’ thing and they are claiming: Well there is really only one truth with God. But, narrative therapy in a practical sense is not really debating the theology of Christian belief because even within Christian belief there are probably hundreds and hundreds of different theologies that exist. Christianity is probably one of the most multi-storied stories out there.

Lucas stresses that “we are so trained [in] knowing the deficit” and taught “to work on the deficit to understand ourselves.” On the other hand we don’t need to look for deficits but see “how much hope brings into conversation,” because “God wants the best for us” and that easily “fits in narrative.” We can plant the seeds of our values into the environment, but in the context of what the other person values as well.

For Lucas the “narrative way is to be open enough, honest and transparent” within his practice. Here “the value of that co-researching and ... learning from each other and the not-knowing and that open curiosity fit in very well because we all have different faiths [that are] completely different depending on our experiences and our local knowledges,” and yet we may simultaneously remain not intrusive, respectful, and fair. For Lucas “that really works in well with narrative and who I am.”

Lucas expressed personal reservations about deconstructing the absolute truth that there is a God:

Do I really need to deconstruct that idea of no absolute truth? Because in narrative speak it’s all upon our experiences, histories and culture. If absolute truth [is a] being [called] God do I need to deconstruct that? ... Can I just get the idea of narrative regarding people’s experiences and what they experience and what knowledge they take from that? Just think about the power of God and the power that has over people – good, bad and indifferent – and what effect that has. Are those effects good or bad? I don’t know. Or is that just acknowledging that God is ... totally in control of all this journey we are on? ... With narrative we can acknowledge that our experiences are gonna be
different and I don’t think that challenges my faith knowing that truth lies with God, God is in control of all this. But what we take from there or how we experience that is going to be individual, isn’t it?

Integrational aspects between narrative therapy and Christian values, spirituality and theology are summarised below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Integration of philosophical ideas</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Christianity is multi-storied and multi-typed (Lilly, Lucy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Contextualising the problem and the person (Ruby)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Narrative therapy is a lifestyle (William)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Truth is relative to the people (William)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Social justice and helping communities recover from trauma (Jack)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Each person actively constructs and creates his or her world and reality (Ethan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Language as a metaphor of narrative can translate Christian faith into postmodern language (Ethan)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table I4. Integration of philosophical ideas

Integrative aspects of Christian values, spirituality and theology are presented in the Table I5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Integration of theological aspects</th>
<th>Expressions</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Made in the image of God</td>
<td>• Trinitarian principle of meeting people in all their relationships – with selves, others and God – as a reflection of being made in the image of God (Lilly)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Seeing clients as created in the image of God (Chloe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Meeting the person as meeting God in them (Lilly)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Relational self – God is the person in relation as ‘I am’ (Isabella, Sue)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus as example</td>
<td>• Jesus taught in parables (Ruby)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Jesus told stories (William)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• God loves us in Jesus - we as Christian counsellors love those around us (Ella)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Jesus was a strong advocate against injustices in the world, just as the narrative approach is (Lucas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian values</td>
<td>• Integrating ‘loving neighbour as yourself’ in respectful counselling with compassion, gentleness and kindness to a person coming for care (Ruby)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Christian values influence the way Christian counsellors see clients in terms of hope, change and transformation (Chloe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Love God, love your neighbour, love yourself (Chloe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Author our personal healthy story toward the potential God created within us, in co-creation with God, on our faith journey, living narrative approach as a lifestyle with bringing God’s love into it (William)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Community of faith has a much better idea of who God is than the individual (William)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Narrative takes away blame and judgment as Christianity does (Olivia)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table I5. Integration of theological aspects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific integrative aspects</th>
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### a) Narrative therapy and other approaches

Responses about the use of other approaches were spontaneous and not specifically sought. However, this discussion will highlight some examples of other approaches used and some integrative aspects and similarities or differences between narrative therapy and other approaches as expressed by interviewees.

Ruby reported using other approaches and “not narrative strictly”, adding “but I love the narrative principles.” Chloe believes that not just narrative fits her values and beliefs.

A person-centred, client-centred approach very much fits in and there will be aspects of various kinds of therapeutic approaches. ... I would see myself as an integrative therapist, an emotional focus therapist but gathering the story of a person’s life is really important. ... I think that’s where narrative stuff starts.

Chloe also stated that “it depends on the individual and the context” and that “the advantages of particular kinds of therapeutic approaches can be used in a context.” Chloe also pointed out that “the really useful ways of approaching pastoral care, counselling and therapy are more similar than different, even in those different contexts coming from different frameworks.” There is also “the dynamic between individuals and it’s about how we work and how we mould what we do to be effective with a particular person” and “that might be more
about where narrative is useful or not, because it would depend on where they are coming from and what they want to talk about.” Even if not using “all these kinds of things,” says Chloe, we can “still kind of hold that perspective.”

For Olivia a narrative therapist may “listen to stories differently than some other therapist … it is really sitting more with the story, without thinking of ‘will I’ and ‘could I’ find the answer.”

It’s more about that journey with the person, and that privilege of journeying with them, not being the expert who can fix them. It’s a bit more humble approach. … Not all other counselling methods are like that but some are: “I'm the expert and you come to me here to be fixed.” Somehow superior.

Ethan said he is also “very much of a solution-focussed therapist” but “[I] have fun with narrative.”

Sometimes I do a lot of narrative stuff which is not openly narrative, ‘cause I use a different sort of language, but it’s the concepts behind what I do and it's also a metatheory and is also a theory. There is analogy, a metanarrative, and a narrative as analogy with the implication that I use a lot.

Isabella shares a new experience:

I like to keep the ideas matching with practice and that’s why I think it’s quite difficult to do a bit of narrative therapy and a bit of something else. I’ve chosen to be only a narrative therapist because I think it matches with the way of being and because I don’t think I can change my way of being … of course I can put on different hats and be different but I choose not to … it’s a hat that fits so comfortably.

As noted earlier two interviewees use exclusively narrative therapy. The remaining fifteen are eclectic and use a person-centred or client-centred approach, emotionally-focused therapy and solution-focused therapy. The other most frequently mentioned approach was also cognitive behavioural therapy.

b) Use of parallel stories

Oliver’s integration and way of working with stories was different to others. For him narrative therapists assume that when a person comes to counselling they already come with a story.

I ask: ‘What is your name?’, and they say: X, Y, Z, and what brought them here. And they start telling a story. In most … it’s a story with a lot of sadness, despair, depression, fear; it is a story embedded in all those elements. … every life can
be seen as having rainy days and sunny days. When the person comes to counselling they experience a long period of rainy days. It’s quite stormy, very overcast, many black clouds in the sky. And because we are there they can’t even see that there may be sunny days in the waiting or that in the past there were sunny days. So they are trapped in the middle of a storm. I listen to their stories and then I start telling them stories which in a way are parallel to their stories, but they have elements of sunny days. ... And indeed there is a good parallel with Christian values and how people live from a Christian perspective.

c) Questionable integrative aspects within a Christian context

Chloe suggested that expectations of theological interpretation may particularly influence Christian counselling.

I think that is problematic because it’s not coming from a more open position. We know that Scripture was written in a particular context, to a particular audience, by a particular author ... I think there is an assumption in Christian counselling that we will give direction. Whereas we actually know that even if direction is appropriate, is useful, it’s actually more helpful if the person comes to their own choices.

She also noted that “from a Christian perspective forgiveness is the ideal” and that could well be pushed. “... that may not be appropriate, that may not be where people are at” and therefore “the difficulty in some Christian counselling programs is various assumptions and interpretations of Scripture and usage of particular structures that are embedded and built in.” The same applies to praying with clients. Jack described a solution to his struggle when narrative says ‘any reality is our reality’ ... Christian tradition might say ‘God’s truth is this’ and there may be a clash there. ... I’m convinced that if someone is a Christian and gay, that to accept them into the congregation, to have them on the church board is about helping them grow in their faith. And that’s what it’s about. It’s about loving and accepting and helping someone grow in faith.

Isabella finds her difficulty in a philosophical area:

I think narrative philosophy, a philosophical stance of narrative therapy which I’m very comfortable with, crosses over with or has some clashes with Christianity - like the idea of metanarrative or a scepticism towards metanarratives. And yet I hold Christian beliefs that there is a truth, there is God... I even said a truth, there is truth, and yet, post-structural ideas that are the basis of narrative therapy sit really comfortably with me. ... The idea of scepticism toward metanarratives and truth I think is a challenge to Christian theology and I just have to make that an exception. I think that’s probably the most challenging part, and I probably haven’t totally integrated that in my thinking.
4.2.2 Specific aspects in use and language - of narrative practices and stories in a Christian and pastoral care and counselling context.

4.2.2.1 General use of biblical stories

Lilly finds the biblical stories, the parables “very powerful” and “the big stories” like Exodus are known to many people, even non-religious, because “you could ask them something about that such as: Have you had the waters parted in your life?” Ruby always works on “bringing it back to the basics.”

I love the Christian stories - they are great with narrative therapy because it is about those same stories of what you’re hoping people develop from their own lives. Jesus did that all the time, he tried to bring them back to the metanarrative of compassion.

Chloe will explore “something that’s voiced and articulated with somebody with faith and how God is at work in the story of their lives.” How much that is articulated with a client “would depend on their kind of faith as well.” Olivia said that occasionally she would use Bible stories or faith journey stories, but only if I know the person is well learned in Bible stories. I might draw on their knowledge, I wouldn't necessarily impose a Christian story, or even a Hebrew story if it wasn’t within their knowledge base or their culture.

Jack gave an example of his work in a Christian context. Some people come for counselling because I’m a minister within a Christian framework. Sometimes the thing they expect is: the Bible says you should do this. But where questions come up, I’m able to bring a Biblical perspective to it or talk about the biblical story within. There are biblical stories that would support what you do, there are some that don’t. Like: What is you core belief about God? We can unpack that a little bit. Tell us where and when that’s happened? Who have you learned that from? What does that say about your values? So we can begin to unpack the Christian experience and help them look at what core Christian beliefs will actually guide them through life … compared to what they have been told or thought they have to be, which may be rubbing against them.

Lucy mentioned using the New Testament stories about Jesus’ mother Mary when, for instance, “challenging the sort of dominant, hyper-masculinity.”
4.2.2.2 Use of particular Bible stories

Interviewee responses merit full recording. Lilly gave her example of using the journey to Emmaus story where the four movements of Jesus support and illustrate both pastoral counselling and narrative therapy.\(^{17}\)

So ... disciples walking along miserable, yakking maybe, and Jesus draws near. He doesn’t intrude, he doesn’t place himself right in their faces, just draws near and walks along. That’s the first, drawing near. The second thing is that he listens ... the third thing after he has listened he enters into the conversation and asks a question. And then he starts to unfold some things. ... He thickened the story for them ... he connected the narrative that they’ve heard, right? It’s like a bridge ... with all that discourse and journeying and walking and sharing the story he helps them find meaning. And he still doesn’t intrude, he goes to walk off and he’s told - please don’t walk off it’s getting dark, come with us ... . He accepts their hospitality and it’s not until he’s breaking the bread that they connect all the stories ... . And what did they do? They don’t continue on their sad way, they go back to Jerusalem in a more resurrected, I guess, way. And so what happens is that fourth thing – he goes away. ... that’s a powerful thing as counsellors or therapists or whatever, that eventually you will get out of their life. ... That story is fantastic, really powerful, the Gospel is full of stories.

Lilly re-named counselling as “companionship” in another example of work with Bible stories. The woman at the well. He’s just sitting there and she’s just walking after him but she grabs the story that he’s telling her about water, thirst, hunger, and she goes back and I reckon that she’s the first disciple, the first apostle. ... she goes back and she won’t believe what she has heard - the discussion and conversation just enveloped her and gave her life. And so she had to tell someone else, and then brought them back. And then his disciples come and say: ‘What the heck is going on in here?’ ... stories of using them with people ... I call it companionship [not] counselling. Companioning ... can use that story if it’s within the context of their dilemma ... ‘When have you ventured to the well?’ and ‘What is the well?’ ‘What story is needed to help you fling those chains off you to be free?’ And that talks into guilt, truth, what other people think of them.

4.2.3 Narrative practices and language with Christians and non-Christians

4.2.3.1 Highlighted Christian aspects

Chloe might even suggest a client “read some stories” but, be careful because even if a client is coming, because I am a Christian counsellor and faith is important to them, the way they see Scripture or the way they see God at that time might be quite different to different times. ... We might talk about

how sometimes the beliefs and trust in God can hold us at those times of huge despair and overwhelming emotion so I might use passages or references like that in the journey with people.

Mia sometimes uses Scriptures that “will help counteract the negative ones (Scriptures) that they have ... maybe from their father or their grandfather or their mother because sometimes Christian faith is used in a very negative way.” Charlotte’s approach is that “when people coming have declared themselves as Christian then I can dialogue with them in that language.” Then “we can cut to the chase through that language, and through that common understanding.” Counsellors “need to be very mindful that although we are both Christian we are in a different place on our faith journey.” Then the counsellor “has to hold back with great respect, discernment and understanding” and “be very careful” while listening “to where they are now.” Chloe waits until “a client expresses a spiritual opening or questioning, then I feel there is an invitation for me to come in along aside them and assess where they are coming from and then try to apply something that is going to resonate with them.”

Lilly finds “it’s easier to draw on your Biblical things with a Christian whatever they are from, [but] you have to be careful how you frame that.”

I had someone say: ‘What do you mean by God’s story?’ So you go to Genesis, creation and all bits in between ... the incarnation of Jesus, ... Pentecost with the spirits, ... the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and all the parables ... Because Father, Son and Holy Spirit for a lot of people may not connect to that what we would call God’s story. ... But will they call it that? ... It’s a different language, different words. It is the same with different Christian backgrounds. ... you get people from other countries, especially Asian countries, [with] their faith ... and their passion for God .... But also they would be in a different space to me.

Yet, as with Lilly, Chloe observed that some people expect “that we are Christian counsellors and therefore that we will push particular, what they perceive [to be], Christian values and be quite directive.” Sometimes people bring their partner along to counselling “because the partner is wandering off and they want to talk about biblical marriage.” Chloe then explores

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18 Lilly’s questions for “someone who is a seeker” not necessarily informed in Bible stories: “What do you know of God’s big story that would really have taken me to your heart? What is the Bible story you have most doubts about?”
“marriage in the Bible ... nothing like what we know now,” emphasising that “I don’t think we can counsel and be value-free ... but it’s not my role to ever judge.”

Some people tell Olivia stories of “very negative experiences in conservative, fundamental churches ... and they somehow don't fit into the box and then experience rejection.” In that case most of the work “would be in the spiritual context, about healing from damage that has been done within the church.” Yet, Olivia thinks “sometimes it’s good coming back to what Jesus taught as opposed to what the church is teaching” and “if faith is being important to this person” having a joint look “at what Jesus said about this.” This might lead to changing a church to still “belong and they don’t have to leave the faith community, to leave their spirituality.” In other cases Olivia might also use Jesus' example as “a sort of role play” and “analyse it in terms of what this is meaning in terms of narrative therapy.” Olivia accentuated that although Jesus wasn’t actually using narrative therapy, he “was a great storyteller and the stories remained.”

For Jack, “just to do plain narrative therapy with Christians works really well” because they “generally know some people who are mature, who have been very nurturing, who have been very loving, that [they] would like to be like that person.” Christians from such a context find narrative practitioners enable people “to unpack their story.” Jack referred here to Barbara Myerhoff who concluded “that we only know who we are by the way we are mirrored back by other people” and as he observed, “people within a Christian context had usually a good variety of mirroring back.” That “gives a great strength to draw on” to “unpack the stories around our identity conclusions.”

Ella said that “if you are a Christian it’s a part of who you are and how you make sense of the world” and “if a person uses or talks about their relationship with God or the things that they do in their spiritual life, whether it be praying or reading the Bible” it can be incorporated into the story. In a Christian counselling setting Ella might keep “a bit of a spiritual direction in the counselling process” but with caution, because “what is one person’s spiritual direction can be different to another.” Sue shares her derivation of re-storying in a Christian context.

19 Jack’s examples of questions: Who would you like to be? What are their qualities? What are their values? How would you apply them in this situation?
... there might be a particular story that I have about my life or particular way that people see my life ... but in God’s eyes it might be quite different. Because often the experiences that we go through, particularly the difficult ones, we tend to see them in a really negative view. But God often uses really hard stuff in our life to build our character, to change us, to redirect our lives, to engage us with other people. So if we look at it from the story as God might see it, and as we might find truth in Scripture, that would be so different to how we might humanly see a story.

Ethan shared a rather rambling and extended, but illustrative example of how to look at God as a character in one’s own story.

Where was God in these experiences? What is it that God is actually doing now in your life? What is God actually saying to you? What are the basic themes God has been chasing you on? That’s because narrative has this notion of unique outcome that ... is not consistent with the theme and the problem-saturated narrative - it’s not the dominant theme, right? But unique outcomes are these exceptional experiences that typically ... are going to be God moments and God events to function as unique outcomes in a person’s life you can zero in on ... identifying how a person overcomes challenges. ... if you are able to identify unique outcomes they lead to the development of a faith perspective ... that has the potential of modifying the theme of the narrative from a problemsaturated narrative to a God journey narrative, and what that means in terms of how a person then reinterprets their story. If you are able to recast a person’s story into a God-saturated story you’ve got a different story. ... What we are really asking them to do is give their own biological narrative, but deliberately have the God theme in it. It’s actually a particular type of narrative construction. Christians ... already do narrative in the way we tell our stories. ... I use narrative therapy ... to bring out empowering meanings and themes, and often if I am able to anchor that to God. Then there’s a whole spiritual aspect to my counselling which I do in terms of challenging their views of God, or perspective of where God was and was not. What is it that God is doing now ... wanting to author for them?

In her work with students Lucy said that the question “Who may be the first to notice this step towards living?” might bring God into the conversation and she finds that the “concept of God can be a really awesome outsider witness.” It helps “to notice things that maybe no other person would have noticed, even just like a softening in the heart or a desire to turn towards a different direction” and that is often where “God comes in.” Lucas said: “Sharing my faith is something I quite often do if that conversation is invited,” and Lilly observed that “some people I know like to be prayed with and some people I ask ... Some people I just know they
don’t like anyone praying for them. And that’s fair enough.” Chloe will also pray with clients who invite her.

In conversations Mia will “trust that the Holy Spirit is with you” and “pray [for] my clients” but will “never pray in the counselling session.”

I think prayer could be a very manipulative thing. So my words in prayer might carry too much weight ... for the client. It might be overbearing. ... I’ve said sometimes: ‘Tell me what you’d like me to pray for this week?’ And I write it down in my diary or remember that. So that’s sharing my faith, I suppose.

Mia was “really cautious” about “prayer counselling that’s quite popular in churches” mainly because of their lack of training, supervision or regulation and “these prayer counsellors could just be doing their own thing instead of caring for someone.” Olivia will “hold clients in prayer” and in her preparation for them “will pray to bring my best into that situation, to be open to whatever intuition or insight might come during the session, whether that's from God or from my training or my experience.” She will also pray in her “follow up, in my debriefing with myself to just hold that person.” For Lucy prayer “can be a little bit of skill and knowledge” and uses it with a lot of her students but not without their request.

4.2.3.2 Highlighted overlapping aspects
Ruby summarized her view of the Christian counsellor role:

We’re called to be Christ-like, love your neighbour as yourself, and find positive loving stories of the selves to strengthen our own identity so that we have the ability to love others. Which I would do with Christians and non-Christians.

For Chloe, whether it’s “a person of faith,” Christian or other, “we can still talk about a higher power or God as they perceive God to be.” However with a Christian we may share “stories of God and God’s love and creation and Scripture” although “we may not share identical theology and usually we won’t.” Chloe mentioned the use of Scripture passages, parables or stories or other stories “that are more modern day parables.” They may connect with stories that impact a person’s life or “be just imagery too,” like general conversation about, for example, a desert experience.
William’s story of organising hikes for youth illustrates generational sensitivity:

You can talk till you are blue in the face, people believe all sorts of things. They need to experience it. I’m not really fussed on what people’s beliefs are but I’m fussed in what their values are and helping them look at their values. If someone raises specific questions like: Are you a Christian? I’ll probably ask: What do you mean by Christian? And then if they want to go further we will have a chat about it. ... There is a lot of neurological growth as we know in puberty right up to twenty-five. It’s a period where it’s an amazing opportunity to set some healthy patterns for being willing to change, being willing to be open, to be willing to look at your values and change. And that’s about narrative story, isn’t it? That’s about creating a neurological pattern for re-authoring your life.

Mia said Christian people offer “a lot more scope to bringing in the faith story.” If it is a non-believer then she asks about people who have helped them on the way and about the story of their past. “Maybe it was a school teacher, when they were in a primary school, who believed in them.” Olivia shares her experience of working in the church building counselling centre, a church ministry that is however “not so specific about dealing with people’s spirituality” but is “really client-led.” Isabella described herself and her work. “I’m a person who is a Christian and I use narrative therapy.” Clients would not necessarily know that Isabella is Christian, but she will “behave in a way and think in a way and live in a way that fits with Christian values.” When working with Christian or non-Christian clients Isabella will “still work exactly the same and use narrative ideas.” However her “ideas about spirituality might be more easily available” in conversation with Christians and she may “offer to pray for people at the end of the session.”

Isabella addressed an interesting issue. Is there a Christian narrative therapy and a need for it?

So what does it mean to integrate God into the conversation? Conversation about God just flows naturally, particularly when you get to ... that part of the statement position map about taking your stand and evaluating how does it fit. ... It’s not a different kind of therapy ... it’s not a Christian narrative therapy, it’s a narrative therapy which I think has many openings to bring in spirituality. ... So I don’t think there are Christian narrative therapists but there are narrative

\[20\] Mia’s examples: “What is your faith story? Where did it start? Who influenced you? What sort of preachers really touched you?”

\[21\] Examples: “Who helped you on the way? Where did you find energy before? Where did you find healing?”
therapists who are Christian. ... I don’t know what Christian narrative therapy would look like, any differently.  

Ella found “no difference in working with Christian or non-Christian,” and as counsellors we “embrace diversity, counselling should be non-judgmental” and “if you would impose judgment there is no healing.” Sue also noted that she had not “actually got to the point of thinking about working with Christian clients differently than non-Christians” nor considered introducing her faith to clients anyway. Sue sees her Christian views about God as hers and “when a client comes in it’s all about their space,” listening, and “don’t try any of my beliefs on them.” Sue would “pray before they arrive and ask God to be there” but when she is “in the space with a client they wouldn’t know that.” Oliver summed up his experience:

Even in telling stories, I need to ... give enough space to make their own sense of the story. ... Christians sometimes have a temptation to impose answers on a client... Christianity has a long story of telling stories, and a long story of alleviating people’s pains through stories. The teachings of Jesus were embedded in stories and this is how he changed many things. The Bible is a big story book and I believe that this is how we survived for two thousand years, and if we are going to grow ... it’s through the stories.

4.2.4 Christian community practices

Jack integrates narrative ideas “specifically in the church” by asking questions - “When in the past has this church been successful? What did it look like?” - “listening for unique outcomes within that ... to paint this picture of the qualities, values, and what that church really stood for in its successful past.” Through that process “some patterns began to emerge” and therefore Jack finds “it’s very specifically a narrative community approach with a church congregation.” Jack gave another vivid example.

In the middle of the broken down buildings ... we built a fire drum, where you could light a fire, and people will just sit around. So people came out of the community meals, out of AA, little old ladies that came out of learning computers, ... to their grandchildren, sit around the fire, chat, build a community, learn to support each other, have some great conversations. People who didn’t know each other are offering to support each other. So, there is another narrative thing about allowing people to tell their story and not try to control it too much but allowing stories to emerge.

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22 I asked if there is something like ‘Christian narrative therapy.’ She responded: “Well, what does it mean? There is a beautiful conversation in Christian circles in Australia. There is distinction made between a Christian counsellor and a counsellor who is a Christian. ... There are people who are Christian who are counsellors and if anything I’ll put myself in that.”

23 That kind of space shows a similarity with later discussed educational space.
Jack finds that “narrative is the opposite” of imposing relativistic stands and morality but instead tries “to step out of our particular stand and allow people to frame the souls and to develop their identity in the way that they would choose to, rather than imposing - this is what a Christian or church would look like.” Jack said a narrative approach “was very successful” in helping the church in which he is ministering “to identify what they stood for and to regain their passion for that.” Also “the church didn’t just stand it on its own,” it was advertised in the community and people came from the community who would not go to church for forty years and become fabulous workers of the church.24 … It’s now that kind of church where people you’ve never heard of pass on their memory of your church. I’ll never [have] heard of them but the community is beginning to wind up the church. … I see narrative as an overall framework within which we do our community work, we do our mission. … it’s about our identity and then allowing identity.

A specific example of using narratives in a Christian context is also Jack’s example of narrative sermons through “just telling a story and allowing a story to speak to people rather than spelling it out as a teaching thing. Ruby emphasised another aspect of narrative approaches in worship services.

We very carefully develop our service in ways that really are respectful of the stories … reminding people of those meta-stories … to acknowledge and understand their cultural heritage. … But also, we are re-telling in church services as we do in counselling, … re-telling the stories of despair, … depression, … struggles, … Jesus on the cross. … But we must acknowledge the story of despair first and the story of struggle.

The main characteristics of this category are presented in Table I6.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specific use and language of narrative practices and/or stories in a Christian context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General use of biblical stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• General biblical stories, “the big stories” (Lily, Olivia) and Parables (Lilly)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Stories about metanarrative of compassion (Ruby)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Stories to illustrate how is God at work in a person’s life (Chloe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Faith journey stories (Olivia)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Unpacking Christian experience within biblical story (Jack)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Using Bible stories to challenge dominant knowledge (Lucy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of specific Bible stories</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Journey to Emmaus (Lilly)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Woman at the well (Lilly)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• New Testament, Gospel and stories of Jesus only (Ruby)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24 “They don’t go to church. Well, they don’t care about the formal church but they do get engaged in conversations of God with people around the place. So I call that church.”
### Narrative practices with Christians and non-Christians

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highlighted Christian aspects</th>
<th>Overlapping aspects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Easier to draw on Biblical subjects with a Christian (Lilly)</td>
<td>Christian values apply equally in Christian and non-Christian conversations (Ruby)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different personal spaces within cultural and ethnical diversity of Christians (Lilly)</td>
<td>Having conversation about a “higher power” and using modern day parables (Chloe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give clients some (biblical) stories to read (Chloe)</td>
<td>Introducing thoughts, raising questions and challenging to think without imposing Christian perspectives (William)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using Bible passages and references in exploring Christian values with people (Chloe)</td>
<td>Use of stories depends on the client - personal, life, Scripture, imagery, significant others (Chloe, Mia, Olivia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Scripture stories to counteract negatively interpreted Scripture stories. (Mia)</td>
<td>Using narrative ideas and counselling in exactly the same way with Christians and non-Christians (Isabella, Ella, Sue)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect, discernment and understanding in using ‘Christian’ language, even with Christians (Charlotte)</td>
<td>There is no need for specific ‘Christian’ narrative therapy (Isabella)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversations about the teachings of Jesus to contrast with contemporary or local church teachings (Olivia)</td>
<td>Give people enough space to make their own stories (Oliver)</td>
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<td>Exploring meaning through role-play on Jesus’ example (Olivia)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mirroring Christian stories and people that model love, acceptance and nurture (Jack)</td>
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<td>Elements of spiritual direction when working with Christians (Ella)</td>
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<td>Re-storying a person’s life through the story as God might see it (Sue)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Looking for God as a character in a person’s story and modifying the problem-saturated narrative to a God journey narrative (Ethan)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>God as outsider witness in conversation (Lucy)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing personal faith in conversation (Lucas)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of prayer (Lilly, Chloe, Mia, Olivia, Lucy)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Christian community practices

- Using narrative conversations in building church community and identity (Jack)
- Narrative sermons (Jack)
- Narrative in church worship services (Ruby)

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**Table I6.** Specific use and language of narrative practices and/or stories in a Christian context

### 4.2.5 Core elements

- some small indicators of narrative practices to be used in training, education and formation of future Christian and pastoral carers and counsellors.

#### 4.2.5.1 Training elements

Lilly suggested that live counselling practice in the classroom can be a powerful way to do a session with students and that “role-playing is really good.”

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25 Noted by Lilly as formational elements.
recorded and then viewed and commented on by everyone, or perhaps “live in the scene.” Educational space therefore has to be “safe and rewarding” that becomes a “sacred space when you’re doing all this just like this is sacred space.” Jessica also recommended role-plays in class and possibly in groups but “only if they (students) feel safe enough.” However, sometimes “it works and sometimes it doesn’t work,” says Jessica, because it may still remain “too performance-oriented and too threatening.” That is also the way to teach by modelling if the teacher and students feel comfortable to demonstrate that.

William argues for counsellors to learn in community and through relationships where they will be “challenging people’s perceptions.” He used the “metaphor of two tribes in a canoe” where “the other tribe coming along in a canoe will try to convince you to get out of your canoe and get into theirs.” This confronts counselling students with an issue of trust. Usually, says William, it ends with the realisation by both groups that solely talking and discussing will not convince people to change canoes. Ethan declares that from his teaching experience he would “just basically spend two weeks” doing “narrative therapy, introducing the basic concepts.” It will serve “to introduce the students to the basic concepts and remap it out and then in class actually do a demonstration.” There Ethan would extemporise by "doing a role play" trying to “bring in the narrative interventions that we have discussed, and use the language as a way of getting them to see what a narrative therapy session would look like in practice.” Sometimes it “goes very wonderfully” and sometimes “it gets awkward,” reports Ethan. At the end the whole class will “do a debrief” to “identify what were the interventions” used, what worked, what were the things they were seeing, what theory applied and also what didn’t work. Ethan concluded that

reflection on narrative as a process in counselling meant that they actually had a sense of how you do it. So it's very, very practical. Then I would get them to work in triads like trying to work on just externalising the symptom and have a bit of fun with it.

Isabella thinks that “the outsider witness, the community and having an audience that enriches the alternate story ... fits in the context of formation, education and training and can well be done in the group.”

26 Referring to her counselling room where the interview took place.
The summary of training elements mentioned by interviewees:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Training elements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Dyads and triads (Chloe, Ethan)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Live counselling sessions with the option of video-recording, role-play, group sessions (Lilly, Ethan, Jessica)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teaching by modelling, demonstrating (Jessica)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learning within and through community (William)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Outsider witness group practice (Isabella)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table I7. Training elements

4.2.5.2 Educational elements
a) Content

There was a narrative flavour to responses. Ella finds it important and “useful to do studies of human development, understanding how people develop from children to adulthood”. For Olivia the essence of teaching-content would be “to listen without judgment and to always go back to the example of Christ in how he was with people.” Also, “accepting, listening to the people stories, listening to the meaning behind their stories in the sense of helping people to opening doors onto their story again.” Olivia equally finds it “important for them to understand the language of narrative therapy” through “using examples” and “a lot of case examples” because “it’s all very well to learn the language but actually it’s the practice that they need.” Olivia argues: “There is no point in knowing definitions without actually knowing how to put them into practice.”

In the section that follows Ethan, formerly a teacher of narrative practices at a Christian college, shares examples of his experience. He is quoted at length to capture a key pedagogical point and as with all earlier extensive quotes, to honour the indigenous narrative wisdom of respondents.

Ethan advocates teaching, initially, “the postmodern thing ... in the very beginning” together with general systems theory as a worldview and with philosophy and philosophical issues in terms of language. Ethan reports using “very much” social constructionism as the philosophical framework which he describes “as being the human world, which actually we
construct, ... nested within the cosmos which is God’s world which he constructed.” He discusses two different streams within postmodernism that are based upon our philosophy and interpretation of language.

You are familiar with Wittgenstein’s language games? ... one whole school of epistemology that actually regards language as a closed system reflected in “Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus” [where] he talked about [how] we cannot access extra linguistic knowledge ... a fundamental problem [for] actually being able to confirm anything that we know. We are locked into our own subjectively, linguistically constructed world. That presumes that language is a closed system, ok? When you look at the nature of Saussurean linguistics and also Wittgenstein’s philosophical investigations, where he talks about the language game, [it] is where language is actually a component in a social act. Which means it is integrated and that language very much operates as an open system that interacts with, and is supported by, a whole host of other processes in terms of gestures, ostentatious references. And the nature of language as a component in the language game presupposes that language is actually an open system. Which means that we are able with confidence to engage with the cosmos.

Wittgenstein in ‘Uncertainty’ says how we test reality is not through objective observations, it’s actually through interaction with the world, and that when our act actually gets the outcome that we expect, that confirms that we are reading the world accurately. So what [he] is saying is that we get certainty through the heuristic of interaction which is a different basis for reality testing than the Cartesian objective observer basis. Once you accept the presumption that language is an open system, then that settles the postmodern radical subjectivism issue. Because it means that you have confidence in the way that you engage with the world. So you say, ok, I use language as a means of actively engaging with God’s world, but God also in a sense languages himself with me. So there is an interaction with God, where revelation is God actually languaging himself into our linguistic world and revealing himself linguistically. So again, you see, there is an integration which can happen on a philosophical level. So, with marriage and family therapy students, if you lay the philosophical groundwork first, I’d say, postmodern philosophy is more Christianity-friendly than modernism is.28

The theological dimension needs to be engaged. All this can be unpacked, says Ethan, “on a theological basis” where “if God is active and engages with his cosmos but is distinct from it, it means that the cosmos is an open system.” However, following general systems theory, “the cosmos is an open system, ... its meaning and its nature is based on its interaction with God.”

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27 Using experience to learn and improve is basic to sound reflective practice.
28 See also Isabella.
Ethan believes this leads us back to “Karl Rahner’s emphasis that creation was an act of grace and therefore the existence of the cosmos actually presumes the grace of God” which is again “that open systems thing” of the cosmos, of existence that points beyond itself.

We are existing by the grace of God, who upholds the cosmos and gives it its own autonomy and so the grace of God interacts with the cosmos and the grace of God also interacts with us and invades our world. Which means we can live in a socially constructed subjective world, without threatening our confidence in knowing God or his truth, because actually there is this intersubjective engagement between God and us and that theological truth. It's not objective truth, its intersubjective truth.

Therefore in terms of Ethan’s teaching experience he unfolded a philosophically integrated framework first to introduce students to postmodern perspectives. His idea of Christianity as “a grand narrative really is very helpful there because it neatly does the anchoring.” Secondly, Ethan would introduce “the specifics of the theory, in and of itself, then how you practically do the intervention” so that students “get a feel from all those three levels.”

However Ethan believes this challenges students with “a very unsettling paradigm shift,” because we have normalised the “notion of revealed truth being objective truth and biblical truth being objective truth and therefore ... non-negotiable and meaning is non-negotiable.” Then we shift away from that “to the notion that actually truth is provisional and is subject to renegotiation, and that there are multiple perspectives that all might be valid and yet different.” Ethan confirms that narrative therapy is very openly postmodern, along with solution-focused therapy, systemic and strategic therapies because they all "involve renegotiation of meaning and multi perspectives."

Therefore a “philosophical worldview groundwork first and particularly the general systems view of the world,” provides the “foundational basis” for integration with personal theology. The student’s theology will be challenged but not their faith, if the teacher is correct in believing that stretching students theologically “at the same time affirms the faith ... You create a theological crisis, but you don't create a faith crisis.” 29 This perspective “opens up its possibilities” for a “much more solid, robust theology ... a lot more bullet proof.” Isabella

29 Ethan: “I think that is really important to bring that element into the classroom.”
thinks that a grounded “understanding of … the philosophical basis of narrative therapy is very important” as students “think through the theology of that … and challenge their thinking around humanism or modernism [realising] that every approach to counselling has its philosophical basis.” No philosophy will be an “exact fit” and “any one and all of them have their challenges to Christianity.” Isabella believes most narrative ways must think through the specific challenges of postmodernism or post-structuralism including “scepticism toward metanarratives, considering that we hold to it as Christians.” For Isabella, narrative is a way of being. The narrative therapists who Isabella highly esteem “use only narrative therapy” and therefore she thinks that “it’s very difficult to play with other approaches at the same time.”

Jessica advocates studying “anthropology and sociology” because “that opens the doors for questions” that enable engagement with “different world views, and help us to hold our world view without feeling threatened, defensive, narrow and closed off.” Lucy’s choice of core elements for narrative therapy education was: “The whole package,” but particularly “that the problem is the problem” because “modern psychology has definitely infiltrated the way in which Christians interpret different aspects of self, an authentic self, and what it means to be a Christian.” Sometimes you have to read out the culture to understand the faith, and if you come from that culture sometimes you’re unsure of whether it’s your culture speaking or whether it’s the faith, because they have been so intertwined for so long. And I think, as modern psychology has done the same with some Christian counselling or just understandings of Scripture, that sometimes that would be a really interesting part to teach.

For Lucy people are “the experts of their own lives” and for that reason “the positioning and working with those power dynamics is the key” that it makes her “very conscious of that” in her own practice. If “presenting to Christian counsellors” Lucy “would probably use examples of the Biblical story.” As educational core elements, Lucas mentioned externalising practices and, as for Lucy, that the “problem is the problem not the person.” Lucas thinks “Christians should live their lives [and] not judge the person upon behaviour we don’t necessarily agree with” and be interested in “the person’s core, who they are, they are a person of God.” Lucas’ experience affirms re-authoring conversations, re-membering conversations and outsider witness practice as “all really honest, truthful ways of working” and therefore “it can fit quite nicely into a Christian context.” He believes that narrative provides
skills and knowledge to allow us to better understand... If we start from ... the behaviour it’s not who they are. I think that implies hope and that we want to understand the person for who they are. So for people who want to learn about narrative that’s where I’d start. ... The effects questions can be quite powerful because we are not assuming that’s good or bad. ... That is where I think we start really to get into that re-authoring, that negative view that we often have about ourselves. I said ourselves because we all experience sadness, the labelling. But I guess it depends on the context. If there are Christian counsellors I guess that will be something that I will really be homing in on. ... Narrative therapy is another frame of thinking and I think that goes back to the philosophical view as well as ethically how you’d like to approach working with the person.

b) Principles
Chloe emphasises the principle of individuality is significant for her in that “God created us unique, with skills and gifts and the capacity for great love.” Therefore training is about “teaching into personal processes and communication skills ... away from case conceptualization, diagnosis assessment stuff where we’re boxing [people].” The approach would be more “let’s have a look” but “let’s not look at the box.” For her “maybe the labels can be useful to an extent, usually about treatment, research, medication or whatever,” but any knowledge about the person should be separated from “an individual” and “so the training is how do we listen deeply, how do we observe well, how do we understand and help this person to make meaning and have a meaningful life and have more purpose in their life.” She recommends teaching “about how we move away from the labels; how do we deal with this, how do we work with an individual and in a way that honours them and respects them?”

As soon as we assume we have more knowledge than the person about them I think we are in trouble. We will have certain knowledge, or certain knowledge about a particular illness maybe, mental illness or whatever, but to assume then that this person’s gonna fit that box is actually doing them a great disservice.

Chloe further emphasised the importance of the therapeutic relationship in addition to skills.

I had one guy who saw a psychiatrist for 25 years and he asked me how old I was because he thought maybe I can see him for the next 25 ... I asked him: What was it about your psychiatrist that you learned? He said: ‘He respected me. He’d take my coat when it was cold and help me get it off, my jacket, and hang it up before we came in.’ Now this is a psychiatrist who presumably did a
whole lot of other work but what this guy remembers is his attitude towards him. ... Now, that kind of attitude could have been shown from a pastoral care worker, counsellor, people trained or not trained, to a psychiatrist who’s had ... many external reviews to get where he’s at.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chloe’s example about respect</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I remember one guy stood up at a conference. There’d been a big debate about what therapy was or wasn’t and this guy, who’s an existential therapist (it fits with narrative therapy), got up and said: ‘After all we are just companions in the search, we must remember we are companions in the search for meaning.’ And then he sat down again. Everybody else had been in all these arguments about it and all these other things. And that’s all he said and he sat down again. And that’s the bit I remember. It was just lovely.</td>
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</table>

Charlotte advocates for teaching Christian counsellors to “get more tools in their toolbox.” She has chosen “to embrace a much wider set of circumstances, cultural and broader spectrum, in order to study, learn and understand in these other areas” that in return have “increased and expanded [her] Christian understanding.” “It’s never diminished it,” said Charlotte, but “the opposite,” and without becoming conflicted but “enlarged.” Charlotte would therefore recommend exploring “what it is to be spiritual ... because [having] faith doesn’t mean you place judgement upon others” and diminish them. It may become “a good thing if they are ready.” Charlotte reports being “very comfortable living in the questions but not everybody wants to do that and that can be quite terrifying.” It is hard to move from a place where you thought you have all the answers to realise you know nothing, and the more you get to know the more you realise: Oh no! Goodness, I know nothing! Well I know very little. Personality is coming to that too. People who must be right whether it’s a counsellor or a client then there can be quite a resistance to actually opening up that box to other possibilities.

Jack believed “just teaching narrative from the beginning would be better,” but maybe also a student has to “go through the tough yards of getting the questions” and then they’ll find narrative. He noted that “most of the senior narrative therapists would have begun as psychologists or social workers, and they began with their own frameworks” so it is difficult to “find one who began with narrative.” When “they were young there was no narrative” so they become “inventors of it.” Oliver said that teaching, counselling and psychotherapy “is a journey made together,” adding that there is no other language than English to understand the true meaning of understanding. In English we say, under-stand. For you to understand you have to place yourself underneath. You have to take yourself out of your own frame
of reference and place yourself underneath. Under-stand. So Christian counsellors, for them to do a good work, they need to under-stand. For them to under-stand, they need to stay underneath, they need to take themselves out of their own rigid rules, their own views of the world which in most cases are limited. And try to under-stand the person’s point of view, even before they dare to criticise or challenge, they need to understand.

He suggests that “perhaps the first thing [counsellors] learn is not to learn technique but to learn how to sit with their own uncertainty” which takes time. His ideal training would begin with “teacher and the student, one on one” as that will ensure “that teaching happens with a greater degree of accuracy.” Only after that “students can go out and practice with each other or with another person.” Oliver believes that “a teacher should be a teacher in every aspect of learning” as well as that “there is no such a thing as rules which can be applied to everyone.”

Lucas enjoyed his Dulwich narrative training, where narrative shaped “the enthusiasm” of his faith. He seeks to be “ethically transparent” appreciating the “respect, the fairness” of narrative approaches, with its “respect that [others] have knowledge and their own experiences that we don’t.” He also focuses on teaching the “micro-skills of counselling” that according to his experience have been reinforced from his narrative training. Lucas reports also using the “white board,” using the language of the person, not my colonising thoughts” and “being de-centred in language.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educational elements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Content</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Human development (Ella)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Understanding the language of a narrative therapy (Olivia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Examples and case studies (Olivia)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Postmodernism (Ethan, Isabella)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• General systems theory (Ethan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Philosophy of language (Ethan)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Social constructionism (Ethan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Integration on three levels: Philosophical, theological, practical intervention (Ethan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Philosophical basis of narrative therapy and narrative practices (Isabella, Lucy, Lucas)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Humanism (Isabella)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Modernism (Isabella)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Theological integration (Isabella)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Post-structuralism (Isabella)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

30 “’Nothing is hidden,’’ said Lucas.
Table I8. Educational elements

### 4.2.5.3 Formational elements

Lilly thinks a key formational factor is self-awareness, “journeying with God in opening up those little dark closets or cupboards and putting the light in there ... to create the safe space for people to be able to do their own work.” Lilly finds role-playing “really good” and also “writing some reflective practice pieces about issues around your own belief system where you’re finding what your own operational theology is.” Sue advises providing “formal counselling for students as part of their course” and get them “to tell their story while they are doing their course.” In a narrative therapy course also “integrate the ideas of how God is a God in relationship.”

Chloe suggests “working with the team over quite a long period of time and gradually introducing different kinds of therapeutic approaches” but also to “work for themselves with that,” and how it applies to their lives. Finally – to actually work. Chloe also thinks “it’s fantastic to have therapy” while in the course “there are opportunities for dyads or triads.” Chloe
suggests counsellors “be confronted with their own journeys” because it will “impact heavily” on how they work. It will also provide “sufficient self-awareness for the formation process” and a “kind of stability”, because regardless of whether a counsellor “comes from a stable or unstable or more or less wounding background” he or she must be “able to make sense of all of that.” Although, as Chloe points out, it is “not that we ever arrive either” for “we are always on that journey.”

Mia also prioritises “their own reflection and their own therapy with someone who helps them reflect.”

For Isabella, “formation is the very key to training as a counsellor and certainly having counselling yourself is key to becoming a counsellor.” It is particularly important for people to “experience narrative therapy” and “as most courses in Australia in counselling encourage or require or expect that you get some counselling from an expert counsellor” it is most valuable to “have a real experience of narrative therapy.” Finally, Isabella also suggests practicing narrative therapy on each other in a student group. Ella naturally supports “some sort of formal training” but if using narrative therapy, then perhaps “trying to tell your narrative and engaging in a therapy yourself also helps you understand the practicalities of the therapy.”

Jack believes “narrative counselling fits so well with a Christian ethos and helping formation, that is, for people to discover what their chosen identity is.” However Jack highlights “safety” and “space,” which became the crucial topics of this research in regard to education as well as therapeutic practice. Jack illustrated this from his practice.

You’ve got to make a safe space. … with formation, if we can create a safe space by helping someone develop their chosen identity then they are in the safe new place. From there they can go back and look at their former identity and deconstruct that without a trauma. … Why I think I’m listening for unique outcomes straight away is if we construct a new identity it’s much easier and I think more respectful than unpacking the problem.

Jack identified parallels in ministry formation and believes that a student’s reflection on a chosen identity in formation is to

begin to feel and experience their own shift in that new position without having to deconstruct the old one. … I think it is a more gentle, loving and Christlike way to help formation … modelling how people can approach their [ministry] no longer as an expert because we’ve moved from the modern period where

31 This opinion resonates with this research inquiry: If the “self” is narrative which means created according to memory, context, audience, timeline, or focus, “who” is actually getting counselling?
we were experts. Now we are journeying with people. And it gives people some tools, some skills for how they will journey with others. ... In ministry there are skills and there are tools.

For Jack, CBT “is about thinking in a different way,” offering a “set of skills which last until someone teaches you to think something different” and “as long as the environment lets us,” whereas with narrative “it goes out one level higher than skills and it gets us to think about who we are, and if we know who we are we will act that way.” It’s the same in formation because “teaching people some skills of counselling is ok, but it won’t be really helpful unless they are being formed as a person.” Narrative is therefore an advance on CBT because it goes to the higher level of identity. Being narrative is helping formation, preaching, community. Whenever I’m going to work with churches it is about formation rather than a set of skills with which we’ll try to [survive] until we read the next book. ... I think when we learn theology we tend to pick a particular theology and then when I read a book or go to a church I judge it according to my theological judgements. ... It’s not about ‘are you like me’ but it’s about ‘how do I help you be who you can be.’

Ethan believes we actually can’t avoid formation because “the student will be stretched and challenged, and formed as a Christian,” and on a practical level he emphasised how we involve God in the therapeutic process and a form of theological reflection.

It’s assumed that God is in the counselling room; [you’re] looking for what God is doing in the life of the client, and relying on the Spirit to guide you ... praying and knowing your Bible, knowing your theology, because you are going to be talking theology. There is also that aspect in training, to encourage the students to do that integration ... with opportunity for dialogue and to be available for students to talk to you.

Unlike other interviewees Ethan would not require personal therapy for students as a personal formational element but rather as a supporting element, with the practical purpose of learning by experience what it’s like to be a client. That requirement comes out of psychodynamic tradition, and their theory about the necessity of a psychoanalyst going through his own psychoanalysis. I think that is theoretically flawed. But most other therapies don’t require that. ... Where I see that as useful ... is for a student to have the experience of what it is like to be in a client’s shoes. You cannot experience being in the client’s shoes as a student, having some counselling, just for some counselling. It’s not the same dynamic. ... I did have that requirement but the purpose was much more practical.
- Self-awareness, knowing your own story, role-play as a formational element (Lilly)
- Practice ‘counselling’ with other students, integrate theology, challenge postmodern ideas (Sue)
- Have your own therapy to see how things apply to your life, practice dyads and triads, confront your own journey and make sense of it as part of formation (Chloe)
- Personal reflection and therapy (Mia)
- Practicing on each other and with an ‘expert’ counsellor (Isabella)
- Telling our own narratives (Ella)
- Safe space in education for development of a personally chosen identity (Jack)
- Modelling Christian identity in education and giving tools and skills to journey with others (Jack)
- Forming a person’s identity to know themselves through narrative rather than skills-learned (Jack)
- Encouraging students to do integration (Ethan)
- Experience of what it’s like to be in the client’s shoes (Ethan)

Table I9. Formational elements

THE FOCUS GROUPS

4.3 Focus Group Findings

4.3.1 Participants and process

As the third and final phase of the research, a small focus group was formed to explore in greater depth and to extend the educational themes emerging from questionnaires and interviews. All invitees had completed the questionnaire, had been interviewed individually and were viewed as data-rich and well-informed. Five out of the ten responded. On the day of the focus group four participants (one male, three female) were present.

Participants are practitioners in a variety of pastoral and counselling/therapeutic settings: church ministry; professional counselling in a secular setting; pastoral care and counselling; professional Christian counselling. They are currently, or have been, involved in several of these categories simultaneously. The focus group took place at Stirling Theological College on December 12th 2015 and was recorded on a digital Dictaphone and smart phone voice recorder.

The three questions explored:

1. How to organise the training, education and formation of practical or pastoral theology students in narrative practices within the framework of postmodern ideas?
2. How, based on the opinion, experience and setting of the respondent, should narrative practices be taught?
3. What would be the key learning goals in training, education and formation of Christian pastoral carers and counsellors?

### 4.3.2 Dulwich training model

The threefold concept of training, education and formation was used in the third part of the individual interviews with the focus on what core elements of narrative practices could become part of an education and training model. In the focus group interest centred on the “how” question and therefore this threefold concept remained as a framework. However, there is another model that needed comparison in parallel with these three concepts. This model is based on the Dulwich Centre article “Developing Training Courses that are Congruent with Narrative Ideas.”

Several of the Dulwich training models were briefly presented to participants, including four main assignments in narrative practices training:

1. **Reading** articles
2. **Writing** reflections
3. **Recording** tapes or transcripts of students’ work
4. **Written and oral presentations**

The four main categories in the Dulwich model that were identified - read, write, practice, present - certainly do not embrace the whole model yet they served the practical question of “how,” the question behind this research phase.

When both threefold (conceptual) and fourfold (praxis) models were considered simultaneously it became obvious that elements from the threefold model disperse throughout all elements of the fourfold model. Reading, writing, practicing and presenting are evident in all categories of training, education and formation. For example, assigned reading texts can influence practical skills, educational information and the formative aspect of the person, all at the same time. Questions for the focus group were therefore formed to “test” the usefulness of the fourfold Dulwich model with Christian pastoral care and counselling.

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33 See Appendix.
practitioners and to see how these categories sit with each respondent’s experience. The questions below are in their simplest form:

Read – books and articles. (About: Training – Education – Formation)
1) What would be your recommended reading for Christian pastoral carers and counsellors?

Write - reflections, papers, essays, case studies. (For: Training – Education – Formation)
2) What kind of writing assignments would you give to students?
3) When? (At the beginning of the course, in the middle, at the end?)
4) How extensive?

Record work practice. (Within context of: Training – Education – Formation)
5) What would you recommend regarding practical work in their own context for Christian and pastoral care and counselling students?

Student’s presentations (Integrated experience of: Training – Education – Formation)
6) What kind of presentations can help students integrate experiences of reading, writing and practice in a reflective and relational way? Consider Christian values, spirituality and theology.

4.3.3 Focus group findings
Jessica, Lilly, Mia and Jack are pseudonyms. Through the initial phase of data analysis, findings were sorted using the categories of the fourfold Dulwich model, but then new and modified categories emerged. Presentation of findings focuses firstly on practical teaching issues as conversation was brief on this issue. The main theme of educational space was presented and explained last.

The main categories are:

1) Written and oral assignments.
2) Reading assignments and influential people in education.
3) Experiential, professional and occupational elements in education.
4) Space.

Conversation started with the question about assignments and Mia described her teaching example.

1) Written and oral assignments
1.1 Theological reflection

As Mia shared her experience with students’ written assignments and the use of theological reflection, normally at the beginning of a course, she suggested there are three voices we try to listen for: the voice of our faith which can take different forms, the voice of society and the reading that we are doing, and the voice of our own experience and heart. ...They write it and they speak it out ... But it’s a story, little vignettes ... little stories.

To enable students to open their minds to their story, these vignettes are linked to relevant literature and then to areas of spirituality as experienced through nature, relationships, the place of God and particularly to inner thinking/feeling, “so it’s kind of listening to different voices when you’re telling your story.” Lilly accurately summarises this process of finding a reality that Mia sees as grounded in our own experience: “So in a sense they’re acting as a witness to their own story, by witnessing what’s there.”

1.2 Reflective writing and journaling

Lilly affirmed the value of “reflective writing” and the need to keep a journal. However the focus group preferred the journal to be loose and open without prescribed topics. Specific requirements for theological or spiritual reflection are not necessary because Lilly believes that “spirituality covers all life and so ... your journal could be about your spirituality, your faith, your practice, your theology, your narrative theory, whatever.” Jack, following Lilly (“even cutting out something from a magazine”) developed this further by suggesting a multivariate approach with “an option of art, drawing, recorded conversation, five minute video.”

Mia focused on the task and application of learning: “I’d try to link the journal into where they are with their life work” and invite them to “write down something ... useful ... trying to get them to zoom in on” whatever can be used in their work, home or relational environment.

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### Written and oral assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical reflection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- listening with three voices, witnesses to our own story – the voice of faith, the voice of society and the voice of our own experience and heart.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- within four different areas of spirituality: nature, relationships, God, inner thinking and feelings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Reflective writing and journaling
Table FG1. Written and oral assignments

2) Reading assignments and influential people in education

2.1 Reading assignments

Jack revealed a preference that reflected a more general principle:

For me it is Freedman and Combs' narrative therapy has moved so much from outsider-witness and deconstructing to what is now much more about maps of preferred identity. So emotionally I want to start with that book but I think practically I’d start at a different place because I think the core is about constructing preferred realities ... to see ‘the other side of the coin’ and modelling that from the beginning.

He added that reading assignments therefore “will depend on the group, on that relationship. So I’d be open until I’ve got to know my group.” When asked if some pre-readings might be required he replied, “No. If the group came from ... say, Japan, I’d probably start with something very different [to] experienced ministers and counsellors.” Jack offered examples of texts that could be introduced according to selected audiences such as ‘Re-imagining Church,’ Michael White’s ‘Maps’ and an unpublished PhD. The rationale for this was to provide a “good counterbalance” that engaged postmodernism, accommodated select demographics, prior level of education, and various leadership roles. Jack therefore argued for the reading list to be tailored primarily “out of the relationship” within the course/unit group and then enhanced by broader, contextual reading.

2.2 Initial reading list of books and articles

Lilly built upon Jack’s emphasis noting that naturally “most courses have a reading list” and that she would prefer to have one as a new student as long as it reflected the idea of

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“journeying with experience.” Mia suggested that Walter Brueggemann’s “prophetic imagination” offered “a kind of a seminal thing ... God’s word can lead to a whole reframing of where you are” as God continues the journey alongside us. Creativity has been mentioned as particularly transformative in training and counselling. Lilly’s reflection on drawing houses with different rooms and creative use of symbols and metaphors when working with abuse survivors indicated the need to mirror this in the training of practitioners too.

Summary of reading assignment suggestions

- Develop reading assignments according to group recommendation
- Develop reading assignments according to relationships with(in) the group
- Model assigned/recommended readings in a study group from the outset
- ‘See the other side’ in assigned/recommended readings
- Create initial reading list of books and articles for course advertising
- Re-edit reading list in accordance with what emerges from group experience
- Use readings that:
  - are recommended by group participants
  - fit group cultural and ethnic diversity
  - help construct preferred identities
  - see the other side of the coin
  - address specific topics (e.g. leadership, postmodernism etc.)
  - establish counterbalance between different readings
  - appreciate and reflect relationship and local knowledge of participants
  - share experience
  - reframe
  - encourage

Table FG2. Reading assignments suggestions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended books and authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michel Foucault in general.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacques Derrida in general.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table FG3. Recommended books and authors

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2.3 Influential people in education and training

For Lilly, behind the reading lists stand authors and significant practitioners. “Before books it was people who made an impression on me,” such as family therapy trainers, counsellors, teachers, “people who were very authentic themselves and were willing to be ... vulnerable.” For the group, these examples of authentic vulnerability complemented and grounded the texts. Jessica highlighted key elements of training where the goal is to “find people who’re skilled educators who are able to help me find my own links with the theory, but with experiential exercises.” Even those who have died (e.g. Michael White) leave an inspirational legacy according to Mia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics of influential people in education and training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• People who make an impression on others</td>
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<tr>
<td>• People who are authentic</td>
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<tr>
<td>• People who are willing to be vulnerable</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Dead people still can be influential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Influential people are skilled educators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Skilled educators help people establish personal links with the theory presented/taught</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Skilled educators use experiential exercises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Skilled educators use creativity: Creativity is particularly transformative in counselling training (including drawing and creative use of symbols and metaphors etc.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table FG4. Characteristics of influential people in education and training

3) Experiential, professional and occupational elements in education

3.1 Action-reflection model and unpacking of preferred identity

Jack emphasised the importance of personal experience in teaching. He noted that in his own practice, the first session focused “on preferred identity possibilities ... the deconstruction comes later once they are in the safe space to look back.” He suggested that whether it was for skill development or teaching of theory “we need to hook into their experience very early, within two or three minutes.” For Jack it could be called an “action-reflection model” or “unpacking their own preferred identity” but reflection upon one’s own story is the key to future learning. Jessica emphasised the need for spiritual-cultural sensitivity given her own absence of Christian heritage and that her spouse’s “experience of faith is very different” from
her own. Personal access to one’s story can be very difficult as some cultural and ethnic groupings of “church people don’t give those stories of faith very easily.”

Nevertheless, Jack reiterated that in the learning process he had “found that stories were the most powerful part.” He noted that culturally and theologically, stories of God’s grace and love can be muted and distorted as “denominations put all this control and judgement around those experiences.” For Jack, theology can sometimes devalue experiential dimensions of the theological enterprise. Therefore “we need to recapture within [us] reflective theology” and work consistently to propose a creative model of narrative practice that is based on “our own theological and narrative training.” There was a clear link for the group between experiential learning, practice-reflection and spiritual-theological identity.

3.2 Safety and over-control of “professionals”

The elements of safe practice and over-control highlighted in this section are highly relevant when teaching narrative practices. They naturally invite a conversation about the professional and ethical identity of counselling students. Identity becomes an even more complex issue when students describe themselves as Christian or pastoral counsellors.

Jessica affirmed that whether one was working in a hospital or in private practice “we are very territorial. I balance, and I struggle, and I wrestle between safety issues and over-control.” Concern emerged regarding those who had been in the field for years, who had “already gone past the gateway … and are in the professions now.” Current ethical standards around child protection, safety, mandatory reporting and boundaries provide “the structure and scaffolds.” However some senior practitioners “are not in this space” and according to Jessica, they create vulnerability for those who work for them. There was strong support for rigorous training in such matters and Lilly again asserted the need for a teaching environment where community-building and story combine because “people won’t listen unless it’s out of relationship.” Jessica raised the issue of professional identities: “How do people prepare for this kind of education and the work of a professional identity?” Her story declared “that you can have many professional identities before you find your final parking station, as in my preferred identity now as a counsellor-psychotherapist.”
This suggests that formation of the person, spiritually, ethically and emotionally, must accompany skill development and theory. However, as the next section indicates, there is a complexity of disciplinary pathways.

### 3.3 Legal and ethical issues in pastoral care and counselling and professionalized Christian counselling

There are pedagogical and discipline-sensitive challenges in directing and managing a group of students on a number of multi-disciplinary pathways and where pastoral carers and counsellors and “professional” Christian counsellors join in learning together. Jessica responded to the dilemma created:

I’d say that the most changing and transforming unit I did was on ethics ... [exploring] the ethics of doing clinical counselling, and seeing the ethics of pastoral care. And then seeing where they overlap. Often where ethics are concerned it’s more [about] legality. There’s a difference between legal issues and ethical issues. ... I think that sometimes ... the people that I know who do pastoral counselling have a lot more freedom within relationships to do stuff that you as a clinical professional counsellor could not do. And I think that’s where the fussiness is. Because there is so much permission given within that relationship.

This contrast in style centres on the pastoral principle of mutuality, but other ethical/boundary dilemmas were identified when Lilly asked for examples. Responses highlighted “church relationships, talking about faith and praying.” Discussion contrasted appropriate and inappropriate touch in a clinical counselling setting in comparison with a pastoral or ministerial setting and Lilly concluded: “I often say to supervisees, 'If nothing happens, nothing happens. If something happens you have to write about it - if it doesn’t look right, it ain’t right in the eyes of the ethics board and the legal board.”

Distinctions between pastoral care and pastoral counselling require differences in contextual illustration and the group explored real-life stories and examples. Jack drew a parallel to his experiences of both roles and his story illustrated the complexity of conflicting roles and the relational challenge to be more than a clinical presence. He had worked for three years as the minister of a church ...
and on the other side of the road there is a counselling centre where I’m a therapist and it really hit me that in the church I preach and live by example in community. So everyone is coming to see me, knows where I live, will probably be at my birthday party and I’ll know the mothers and the kids. And we’ll have lunch together regularly. But I may also be their therapist for a designated hour or period of time. Then of course I’m at the counselling centre and I’m not allowed to look at some of the client’s records without permission. I walk into church and women who are 90 come up and give me a kiss! Imagine that happened at the counselling centre. I wouldn’t last a day!

Jessica, who has had ministry experience, highlighted the value of counselling in a pastoral framework where counsellors do not manage dual relationships well “unless they are trained ethically and unless they are supervised well.” This is not seen as wrong and there is “nothing second-class about good pastoral counselling.” The ethical dilemma emerges when practitioners are caught between “call and identity, and jump in full with one or the other.” The inevitable overlap can lead to diffuse role identity and consequent ethical dilemmas, suggesting that any training should strive hard for vocational and contextual clarity and distinctives. However, the group wondered how each distinct discipline could enhance the depth of care provided. The long sequence of dialogue below has been deliberately quoted to highlight this creative tension.

Jack: And there is (overlap). ... When you’re a therapist and a minister in that one context ... I wonder if there is a possibility to challenge. I think one of the beauties that pastoral ministry can bring is that you are teaching and modelling community [in a way] that you are not allowed to in a therapeutic context.

Jessica: Correct.

Jack: And does the therapeutic world lose something?

Jessica: Of course we do.

Jack: Because you don’t have a real relationship.

Jessica: Community isn’t with the clients. Because that is the protective factor. I think ... that it’s even more important that we as the therapeutic community, people in therapy, actually create community that allows these conversations.

Jack: Isn’t that something that Michael White did? Whether it was bringing in people who previously told that story to come and to be outsider-witnesses. And his own therapeutic practice was often something that comes across as what he would call a minor spiritual moment because it was very, ... What’s the word? Loving or something ... connected. I think there is room to challenge each other on that. Certainly the world is challenging the church but there is room to challenge back.
This researcher wondered afterwards if that counter-cultural “room to challenge back” might be a possible general description of “the space” participants emphasised as the main theme of this focus group.

Jessica: Because clinical doesn’t mean sterile, clinical doesn’t mean without warmth ... it’s also challenging how we do warmth, how we do affection, how we do connection within a safe therapeutic setting. And that clinical does not mean...

Lilly: ...sterile?

Jessica: Thank you! ... I think that is the key word. There is a difference between that emphatic warm connectedness and it is a tricky thing! I think it’s actually our job to work that out - not for the client or the parishioner.

Jack: ... and in training how do we help people know that? I’d say ‘know’ rather than ‘teach’ it.

Jessica: Go and get their own therapy in their own friendship circle and hug freely.

Jack: That’s one thing. That’s probably the traditional way. But I think we can help people to remember their own stories of what was influential in their life. And reflect on that. ... coming from the narrative perspective that’s probably my preferred option. ... we’re not just imparting information but we are actually enabling people to remember their own stories of warmth, and love, and transformation as a part of their skilling to be able to assist others and their preferred identity conclusions. ... it’s something very, very deep for me.”

Mia: I think there should be a whole unit of study of how we make that relationship connection in a safe way. Safe to the other person.

Jack then refocused discussion on the concept of training as community-building where assessment tasks emerge. “Journeying together ... builds that relationship, we respond and then we reflect upon what is raising up ... we produce [perhaps] an essay ... more action-reflection.” The energy and passion behind this discussion suggested that this is a priority element in training and formation.

3.4 Discipleship and/or preferred identity

Jack emphasised the element of discipleship in his concluding words on the differences and similarities between Christianity and narrative. He noted “the ethics of power, being decentred, the whole outsider witness, preferred identity” as common to both. He struggled because both Christianity and narrative “question the normal stories of culture and call us to what we might call discipleship or preferred identity in the community.’ Any course should
address this in such a way that practitioners are enabled to critique and challenge cultural factors. He developed a helpful link: “In Christianity we call that ‘[moving] away’ from just following culture towards discipleship. In narrative we call that – [moving] away from problem-saturated stories to preferred identity.” This parallel movement, described in different language, touches an important point of connection that can be addressed theologically.

The Table below summarises the emerging themes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiential, professional and occupational elements in education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Action reflection model</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Immediate focus on student’s experience and unpacking of their preferred identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Differences in culture and Church/faith tradition - sharing stories in the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Stories are the most powerful part of the training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Safety and over-control of ‘professionals’</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Medical and therapeutic settings tend to be very territorial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• With over-control by ‘senior practitioners’ supervising ‘teams,’ a safe space for sharing experience might be lost for young therapy practitioners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• ‘Control’ people run teams and it’s all about judgement. But people won’t listen unless it’s out of relationship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• We can have many professional identities before finding our ‘final parking station’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Legal end ethics</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teaching about legal/ethical issues unifies Christian and pastoral care and counselling as well as counselling in general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ethics discussion is more about legality - there is a difference between legal issues and ethical issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Pastoral counsellors have a lot more freedoms in relationship than a clinical ‘professional’ counsellor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Places of “fussiness” (tension) between clinical counselling and pastoral settings: church relationships, talking about faith, praying, appropriate and inappropriate touch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It is possible to challenge the issue of dual roles because pastoral ministry brings teaching and modelling community that might be absent in therapeutic setting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It is important that the therapeutic context creates community in a safe and protective way for the client</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• There is room to challenge each other (clinical and pastoral). As the world is challenging the Church so there is room to challenge back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discipleship or preferred identity in the community</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Both Christianity and narrative question the normal stories of culture and call us to consider or decide between religious discipleship and secular preferred identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Both Christianity and narrative call us to constructively criticise culture and the way it influences our identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In Christianity we call that – moving away from following culture towards discipleship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In narrative we call that – moving away from problem-saturated stories to preferred identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• It is a powerful experience if training focuses on aspects of how culture influences all these themes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table FG5. Experiential, professional and occupational elements in education
4) Space

4.1 Space for challenging stories and space for silence
Lilly elaborated on the topic of theological reflection and ways of implementation in a student group. The images of "permission and space" opened a new category about the "space" of/for education and training. This can be personal space, or educational, theological, and sacred space where students have "permission" to be who they are without judgement or prerequisites. The concept of "space" became the ultimate theme of the whole group and Lilly strongly affirmed that there are certain things that happen when people are telling their story that challenge their faith, that challenge what they have believed in ... it’s really important to make sure that you empower people. If they don’t see change that’s ok because it’s their story ... and because people are moving on inside here (pointing to herself) but maybe don’t know the words, don’t feel safe, the language, other people around them might probably even dominate so they can’t do it. So I’ve always got that thing of not assuming that the story that is said is the whole story.

This space is therefore expansive, open, and full of freedom to explore stories because even if “they have spent some time unpacking them that’s never the whole story and most people have not spend any time unpacking them.” For Lilly, this creative and transformative freedom extends to the practitioner, and she noted the importance of “reminding” people in training or teaching about the possibility that their views and ideas might be challenged and changed by sharing and listening to stories. “I think that’s an important part of training or teaching.”

Jack linked the idea of “space” to Foucault’s writings and how “power is used to create identity for economic reasons.” However it can also be used to empower others, giving examples from ministry and mission to a community that is time-poor and “space and quiet” poor in the midst of what Jack called “chaotic web space”:

One thing I’ve observed we do really poorly or give no attention to at all is space. We have a man-shed, community breakfast for people who are struggling, an AA. We created a fire drum and I didn’t have to do anything. People gathered and smoked and drank coffee and pastorally cared for each other. My role became much more limited because I was providing the space. So ... the core element that I think we have lost in our church training is providing the space for that vulnerability and honesty. The space is physical, emotional ... but also the huge challenge is what space is my space ... no longer limited to physicality in the same way.
4.2 Space as chaos
Jack mentioned “chaos” a second time. “Allow people to go in their own chaotic directions” as a form of “chaotic and broad” educational space where the risks feel uncomfortable but “it is something as simple as having a relationship with God as trust, … following and love.” It is invitational space to discover “abilities and disabilities. I guess the theology I’d want people to come out with is as broad and as chaotic as that.”

Jessica shared her experience of working with couples in counselling and drew a connection between “building relationships” and “creating space for chaos” that could offer a similar environment for learning. “I do a fair bit of couple work. When you’re talking about clash of cultures, clash of whatever constructed realities they have and when they are in conflict, it is like a mini war. So I think in part of the space … we talk about freedom, being able … but also isn’t there a space for people to see that chaos is ok? That lack of clarity for a while is ok?”

This in turn, sets up the need for a space where paradox, ambiguity and doubt are allowed. Lilly affirmed that “doubt is ok. … and having the space to say – ‘I’m not sure’. There are many people in theological colleges who are not sure where they are with God or what God’s about. And they need to have safe space to just voice that.”

This space can “contain anxieties and fears” and the practitioner is invited to “allow the chaos to occur, [and allow] people to experience that sitting there and holding this is actually ok.” Such acceptance might lead to deeper, understanding because, as Jack noted, “this is about relating again, an important part of keeping that chaos safe.”

4.3 Elements for building space
Given that student groups often have great diversity in theologies, ethnicities and cultural backgrounds, how do educators organise a space to manage sharing stories in a safe way? Will their different voices be heard with a sensitivity that appreciates everyone’s experience, uniqueness and identity? A number of factors emerged that the group believed would further enhance the learning environment.
a) Validating personal stories

To illustrate the sometimes enormous differences in cultural and ethnic backgrounds, Mia shared a personal story of a Coptic Orthodox survivor of ISIS torture who had been exposed to terror-killing in her home country:

Her experience was so dramatic. So hard. If you’d looked around the room to see a kind of semi-anxiety should we be saying something to soften her opinion … it’s not easy, but her cultural experience was so great and so strong that most of us held back. So we let her be.

This story is primarily about validating personal experience and secondarily about opening up further opportunity to explore with someone (i.e., helper, counsellor) who does not share the same experience. Trainers or teachers or leaders of groups could offer guidance such as “that must have been a terrible experience for you and most here would not have had that experience.” After validation, the question will then focus on how people move on from that story, a fruitful area of learning. Jack agreed about the importance of validating stories as a way to avoid creating a judgmental or overly-critical environment. The classroom dynamic is both the ‘teacher’ and the ‘teaching’ and therefore acts as a “model to the other people in that room. I’ve validated that story. What I think about it or my theological position on that has nothing to do with her story. … That’s her experience, her story.” Validation therefore builds trust, relationship and especially authenticity. This is where students might “see that you’re authentic, that you’re real and so space is about building up relationships, building up trust. So if you’re just meeting once with students or clients that’s not so easy.”

b) Developing hooks for exploring stories as a compassionate witness

Jack added some “how to” suggestions for building space, especially how to “develop the hooks on which people can base stories. What do we begin with? Is it practice or is it a textbook?” The emphasis is upon learning therapy by “doing,” but given that “narrative … is a philosophy rather than a set of skills” practice is not adequate without the “papers and presentations that challenge our understanding, [the] core being of our constructed beliefs and identities.” Again the teacher must be guided by and “feel the people we are with.” For Mia it is more than hooks for stories, it is essentially a pastoral stance that becomes the medium for teaching: “It’s compassion and empathy, [being] a compassionate witness.”
A pedagogy and learning environment that are essentially, and contextually pastoral presents challenges. Educators may well raise questions but Mia suggests that “we are walking with the person instead of trying to direct them.” If we borrow therapist (in contrast with teacher) values, “I think the whole concept of counselling is empowering the other rather than us having the answers. ... It is a relational thing where we are with the person in their struggle. ... Best teaching [practice] is when students find the answers themselves” within a space where questions emerge and where “the very teaching we want to model [comes from] the therapeutic relationship rather than an educational relationship.” The values of narrative offer “de-centring, de-powering ... to grow and seek new opportunities and transformations part of which will be imparting information and most of it would be about practice and reflection.”

Jessica further integrated space and education in her example of experienced counsellors/teachers/ministers engaging with “The Critical Journey” and challenging the model of development of church, spirituality and education. “Sometimes I’ve sat with groups with very high anxiety [and asking] – are you going to lead me to some kind of answers or not? That can distract what I call ‘the learning’.” She resonated with Mia’s other characteristic of theological educational space where ambiguity is valued and affirmed. “We are living in ambiguity and Christians ain’t comfortable with ambiguity. ... Also, we have to move from tribalism into some bigger vision. I think tribalism is our enemy. ‘Me and mine, we’ve got it right’ and all of you guys are very dodgy.” Challenging this requires us to enable different voices to create different spaces where different faith stories and images of God can be normalised safely: “So what does it mean to create a normalising culture in the class where whatever happens, happens, and it’s ok? Unless you choose not to be.” Ultimately such an environment enables all participants to be, for each other, the “compassionate witnesses” named earlier, which is an effective way to teach narrative therapy.

c) Scaffolding situations for learning

Jack challenged the idea that people only learn when they are ready. “Vygotsky would say to that – no, we can actually create scaffolding situations in which people are ready to learn,” through relationships and stories that become sacred, thus reflecting “something that’s
wonderful about the connection between Christianity and narrative ideas – the power of story for transformation.” This involves an inherent respect and curiosity and Mia notes: “And it’s not teaching that this story means A, B, C or D. It’s: ‘I wonder what this story means? I wonder what it means to you.’” Conversation then turned to the scaffolding for the course being investigated through this research, with affirmation of some of the principles embodied. Articles, books and reflections will prompt the scaffolding which they put into their own scaffolding - transformational stuff, personal stuff, there will be story - so I’m wondering whether all the reading, writing, practice, presentations that you talked about - is the scaffolding? And they’re going to fill it in with their own bit which will look like a different house or building to everybody else’s but will have the same structure.

d) Secular and professional: sharing personal stories in a theological educational space

So what will this structured space look like and will it both secure a formational space for students and motivate sharing stories about their faith experience without imposing any particular theology or spirituality? The group offered questions from within a narrative frame:

- “What is your most profound experience of God or worship?”
- “What was your image of God when you were five and what is your image now?”
- “Who is the person in your life when you were young who really communicated God to you?”

Such questions will enable people to thicken their stories of faith so that they form a flexible contrast to linear questioning so they can “care and love and journey with other people ... and encourage their spirituality rather than their religion. ... It’s about helping people to deconstruct their faith stories and reconstruct them around their preferred faith identities.” However, does everyone want to deconstruct their faith?

Lilly emphasised the importance of explaining the meanings of terms and concepts because for some people deconstruction means they say “I’ve got nothing left.” Culture, context, age, tradition all make a difference so Jack aims for “reconstruction rather than deconstruction ... the art of curiosity” where questions emerge out of the context and not just from a formulaic position based upon professional experience. The excitement of this is evident below.

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40 Document given to participants at the beginning of the focus group. See Appendix 2.
Lilly: I’ve spent most of my life being a therapist, being counsellor in what church might call a secular world. So ... I did my work with a variety of religions, faiths, spiritaulties and that was the best training that I had. Ever.

Jessica: It’s an open market place. It’s where Jesus goes.

Lilly: And finding that I saw Jesus in so many faces.

Jack: Isn’t that a good theological space?

Lilly: That was fantastic and I still carry that and so when I hear people say to me ‘Ah I’ve got doubts and I’m not sure about this,’ I got quite comfortable with that. I don’t tell them all of my stuff. I may say some of it, but I feel quite comfortable with that. Do we as Christians have the definitive answer? We don’t.

Jack: So it is the faith that’s been a part of helping people to get to a point where they can see Christ in others.

Lilly: It is about language. Working in outside organisations you can’t mention faith... and it’s fantastic because it opened my eyes to see Christ in the world.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Space characteristics</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Space for challenging stories</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Asking permission for challenging stories and building a space to feel comfortable</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Stories may challenge faith</td>
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<tr>
<td>- People may be moved inside as much as outside</td>
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<tr>
<td>- No story is the whole story</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Reminding people in training or teaching that their ideas and views might be challenged or changed</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Space is ‘an absolute key thing’</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Providing the space for vulnerability and honesty</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Space is physical and emotional</td>
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<tr>
<td>- The challenge is: what of space is ‘my space’?</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Other places may use space better than churches (i.e., coffee shops)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- We live in a time-poor society where people don’t value space and quiet</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Example of contemplative practice where we are free to sit in the space</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Space as chaos</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Allowing people to go in their own chaotic directions</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Unpacking relationship with God as trust and love in the context of our abilities and disabilities even if ending in chaotic and broad theologies with uncomfortable answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- There may be a space for people to see that chaos and a lack of clarity is ok for a while</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Doubt is all right</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Providing a safe space in education to voice uncertainty about faith and theological issues</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Space can contain anxieties and fears and chaos may be allowed for people to experience it, learn to sit with it and hold it as something that is all right</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Space to sit with the chaos may provide new relationships if kept safe</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Elements for building space</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Validating personal stories</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Validating people’s stories through modelling rather than building critical environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Trust, relationship, authenticity and time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Relationship, trust, authenticity, time create space where questions can be asked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Developing hooks for students to explore their stories</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Creating space for people to explore their stories and develop hooks to base things upon

- Providing space for doubting yourself
- Modelling therapeutic rather than educational relationship
- Remembering, thickening and valuing rather than teaching
- Transformation and imparting information mainly based on practice and reflection rather than learning
- Ability to sit with questions as an approach to learning
- Theological educational space necessarily includes ambiguity
- Moving from tribalism into the bigger experience
- Voicing diversity of personal spaces in the education room
  - Scaffolding situations for learning
  - Scaffolding situations for learning /Vygotsky/ rather than readiness for learning /Piaget/
  - Based on relationship within and with a group; ask permission for the basic core of scaffolding – people’s story is also a sacred story that sits between all participants
- Stories are power for transformation
- Space is also expectations and language
- Scaffolding as introductory structure of the class/course
  - Secular and professional: sharing personal stories in a theological educational space
- Ask people to share their experiences and faith stories in an educational setting
- Help deconstruct the student’s personal faith stories and reconstruct them around preferred faith identities
- Reconstruction rather than deconstruction
- Deconstruction as the art of curiosity
- Secular working environment can serve as a theological space for learning. Experience sometimes even better than the religious setting to meet Jesus in so many faces
- Faith as a helping element to see Christ in others
- Contextual restriction about language may serve as a constructive element for the development of theological space

Table FG6. Space characteristics

Final note: Two categories of the Dulwich training model were not specifically “languaged” by focus group participants: practice, and presentation and sharing of knowledge and experience. However, many aspects of these two categories permeate other categories that emerged from conversation. For example, within the first category written assignments merged naturally with oral presentations.

4.4 Summary of main themes across all three research phases: A bridge to Discussion

This research hypothesised that many aspects of Narrative therapy are compatible with Christian beliefs and values. A second hypothesis assumed that those aspects may enrich the field of Christian and pastoral counselling. A third hypothesis claimed that these aspects may serve as a valuable addition or even a fundamental element for the training, education and formation of Christian and pastoral counsellors. This summary of main themes seeks to identify research findings that support all three hypothesis.
Reference to the use of Narrative therapy by Christian counsellors is found in question six in the questionnaire: What approaches, methods, techniques or theories of counselling do you use the most in your practice? The response in regard to Narrative therapy was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent’s assessment of Narrative therapy importance for their practice</th>
<th>Most important</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Neither important nor unimportant</th>
<th>Not important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>11.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table MT1. Respondent’s assessment of Narrative therapy’s importance for their practice

66.7% of Christian counsellors placed Narrative therapy within some range of importance for their practice and 28.6% found it most or very important. In relation to this research hypothesis Chart Q8 shows that 86% indicate a choice for Narrative therapy because it aligns with the counsellor’s personal Christian faith.

This confirms the first hypothesis that many aspects of Narrative therapy are compatible with Christian beliefs and values. Additionally, 79% of respondents find Narrative therapy a good choice because it aligns well with the context of contemporary life. This finding supports the second hypothesis that Narrative therapy enriches the Christian counsellor’s practice.

**4.4.1 Integration of narrative practices offers a personal and spiritual journey**

Interviewees highlighted personal integration. People from many backgrounds come for counselling and Christian counsellors, in their own words, have to find peace with that. This process has the quality of a spiritual journey and such integration is a slow and continuous process. This researcher’s own journey of integration of postmodern and narrative ideas led to a great variety of readings, a number of seminars, several training programs in Narrative therapy and about two years to reach a point of integration which is, of course, still an ongoing process. One participant described integration as a developmental process. Another noted that integration sometimes invites counsellors to embrace wisdom from other cultures, a very real challenge for some Christian communities and traditions. For others the Christian story, and a Christian faith experience based on unconditional love, provide the motivational factor in counselling. Encountering wisdom from other cultures also supports the second hypothesis of narrative practices as an enriching concept - given that inter-cultural and inter-faith dialogue often serves that purpose. Using narratives in conversations with persons from other
cultures offers all participants a non-threatening and non-invading exploration of the worldviews and language expressions of “the other.” Likewise, narratives expressing Christian stories from different Christian traditions are not obliged to tease out theological points of doctrine. According to one interviewee, narrative is therefore a very graceful practice. The topic of interfaith dialogue is developed later in the Discussion chapter.

The integration of narrative practices is not just a choice of a method of therapy. It is a choice of a worldview with a new set of values: respectful relationship with others, and theological exploration, a choice open to new conversations. Transcripts of interviews, and the passionate phrases contained therein, seem to suggest that the integration of narrative practices asks for the same measure of commitment as embracing Christian life and faith. It also reflects the situation of the pastoral worker whose engagement often reaches beyond profession or job and becomes something of a “call.”

In support of the first hypothesis it became evident that integration happens through working on our personal story, from within our own personality and family history but also from our spiritual journey. Some participants emphasised that narrative practices actually provided a good vocation/career fit for them just after they reached a certain point in their own spiritual journeys. The choice of narrative practices thus became not only an outcome of that journey but also a key to its further growth. For Jack, integration is about adopting a narrative view and philosophy, rather than merely integrating a set of skills. William described integration of narrative practices as “a way of life” and Isabella as “a way of being” that is respectful, without assigning hidden motives or psychopathology to people. Some interviewees work with stories in a much broader sense that does not necessarily include Narrative therapy ideas or even general postmodern worldviews. Further, some Christian counsellors use only particular narrative ideas like externalising rather than embracing the whole philosophy behind it.

4.4.2 Integration of narrative practices and ideas
This section summarises some of the main ideas and language expressions of Narrative therapy. It offers the main concepts as a contextual frame as they find an echo or enhancement in interviewee responses. The respondents therefore reflect, interpret and
extend the basic theories so the following is essentially THEIR maturing dialogue with narrative principles.

Assumptions of narrative therapy reflected in the data
A key narrative feature is the determination to work with people in a non-pathologising way by using metaphors, narratives or stories. This practice is reflected in the findings and used many times to support the choice for narrative practices.

Assumptions behind a narrative approach are alluded to in the data and include: 

- People possess inside their networks the skills and knowledge to address their problem stories – supported by interviewee validation of the counsellor’s non-expert stance and not-knowing positioning.

- Stories grow in authenticity and richness with the audience present – interviewees note the enhancement of story through group interaction.

- Stories are intertwined with power and relationship discourses – Jack, Ethan and William all critique cultural norms.

- Narrative provides a rich story development – interviewees often mentioned “thickening” the story.

- People’s identities are shared in stories and shaped through relationships, history and culture – the majority of participants reflect on the diversity of being a Christian within cultural diversity.

- People are meaning-makers looking for meaning in their lives and creating meaning when constructing stories – Chloe, Mia, Jack, Ethan, Olivia and Lilly base their responses on this.

- People actively select certain events as part of their storylines – this was elaborated on and illustrated by participants.

- People have many more experiences that could be taken into their storylines than initially told in the first story – Sue, Lucy, Lilly, Ethan and Jessica reflected on aspects of multi-storiedness and multi-perceptiveness.

- Narrative approaches support people in finding ways to tell their story themselves – a strong resonance appearing as aspects of “their own story” in the interviews are

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41 Cramer, Narrative, 1-2.
emphasised by Olivia, Ella, Lilly, Sue, Chloe, Jack, Ethan and Ruby, and also later by Lilly, Mia and Jack in the focus group conversations.

- People’s lives are not single-storied but multi-storied and some stories are more influential than others – again reflected in responses.

Interviewees mentioned all of these assumptions when describing principles followed in their work. It also testifies that integration may be rather descriptive and a very broad process that is not necessarily languaged as expected. Alice Morgan\textsuperscript{42} points out that each therapist might have a different idea about the use of narratives, as indeed the interviews revealed. Some work towards understanding people’s identities, others approach problems and their effects in people’s lives. Some explore the therapeutic relationship or the ethics and politics of therapy while others identify ways to talk with people in a therapy setting. Morgan offers a summary definition where narrative therapy

seeks to be a respectful, non-blaming approach to counselling and community work, which centres people as the experts in their own lives. It views problems as separate from people and assumes people have many skills, competencies, beliefs, values, commitments and abilities that will assist them to reduce the influence of problems in their lives.\textsuperscript{43}

### Social-cultural context

Narrative therapy, echoed by the data, suggests that problems are socially constructed over time through social interactions and social processes. Interaction occurs between personal history, family history and a social-cultural context that include issues such as gender, patriarchy, status, hierarchy, power relations, race and class.\textsuperscript{44} Besides social constructivism Freedman and Combs identify “the lens of poststructuralism” as one used in a narrative therapy.\textsuperscript{45} Interviewees referred to these aspects, Ethan most consistently.


\textsuperscript{43} Morgan, \textit{What}, 2.

\textsuperscript{44} Cramer, \textit{Narrative}, 4.

\textsuperscript{45} Jill Freedman and Gene Combs, \textit{Narrative Therapy with Couples... and a whole lot more! A collection of papers, essays and exercises} (Adelaide: Dulwich Centre Publications, 2002), 14. 

\url{http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/post-structuralism}. 

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Maps for the journey: summarising themes from interviews

Michael White contantly developed and upgraded his ideas, his final revision appearing in “Maps of Narrative Practice.” This seminal work provides a reference point for the following summary that identifies interviewee’s points of congruence with, and divergence from White’s foundational principles. 46 White illustrates Narrative therapy with a childhood story, his “visiting other worlds,” first with the bicycle, then with the car and later with his therapeutic practice. Through all this he discovered maps as a metaphor for his work with “people who consult me.” White defines maps as “constructions that can be referred to for guidance on our journeys – in this case, our journeys with the people who consult us about the predicaments and problems of their lives.”47 His use of “our journeys” accents therapy as a mutual process, a common journey of therapist and consulted person, thus abandoning the expert position. It embraces aspects of personal experience in the body, mind and spirit where eventually the final outcome is a freshly discovered or renewed identity.

Maps “can be employed to assist us in finding destinations that could not have been specified beforehand, via routes that could not have been predetermined.”48 The maps help us to expand awareness of the diverse ways personal stories can be constructed and told. The maps presented in his book are not presented as the “true” or “correct” way of offering narrative practice. Experience shaped his ideas so must not be considered a norm for narrative practice for other practitioners.

White does not see therapeutic conversation as something to be ordered and defined, and uses maps to develop opportunities for exploration of neglected aspects of people’s life “territories” in ways they wouldn’t have thought possible before.49 White’s six maps enable rich development of stories during the course of a therapeutic encounter: Externalising conversations; Re-Authoring conversations; Re-Membering conversations; Definitional ceremonies; Conversations that highlight unique outcomes; and Scaffolding conversations. Discussion will reveal that interviewees recorded using a number of these maps.

47 White, Maps, 5.
48 White, Maps, 5.
49 White, Maps, 5.
Following White, narrative practitioners developed additional maps, yet his maps still serve as a keystone. Interviewees most commonly referred to externalising conversations and conversations about unique outcomes and their use of the statement position map, failure map, re-membering conversations, and scaffolding conversations. Most interviewees used the journey metaphor to describe their personal experiences and alluded to integration processes, their practice with people and experience of people coming to conversations. The journey metaphor fits well with contemporary Christian experience and is found in other areas of pastoral practice besides counselling. Finally, consistent with the experience of the researcher, maps could very well constitute the core of Narrative therapy training and are extensively taught at the Dulwich Centre.

**Externalising conversations**

The person is not the problem but the problem is the problem.⁵⁰ Externalising the problem takes therapist and client through four stages. Firstly, in naming the problem, both therapist and client characterise the problem and work towards particular descriptions of the problem, simultaneously negotiating it in an experience-like manner. The second stage explores the effect and consequences of the problem by considering various aspects of people’s lives and relationships. Thirdly, the effects of the problem are evaluated by inviting the person to adopt a stance in relation to the problems. Fourthly, the evaluation is justified by enabling people to speak about their values, beliefs, hopes, dreams, principles and purposes.⁵¹

Externalising conversations help people emerge from this internalising process by objectifying “the problem against cultural practices of objectification of people. This makes it possible for people to experience an identity that is separate from the problem; the problem becomes a problem, not the person.”⁵² The process reverses how a sociologist might frame human social learning stages. White suggests that “many of the problems that people consult therapists about are cultural in nature.” Because the thought habits that construct internal

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understandings can, in themselves, be the root the problem, this area is “significantly a cultural phenomenon.” Interviewees were highly aware of this influence.

White also noted Foucault’s 'dividing practices' that separate the homeless, poor, mad and infirm from the general population by ascribing or assigning them what may be termed spoiled identities. Dividing practices can lead to objectification of identity and the problems people face then become 'truths' in their lives. Consequently a person, through the lens of professional disciplines, may be labelled as 'disordered' or 'dysfunctional,' or at least an 'incompetent' or 'inadequate' individual. Externalising conversations can serve as a counter-practice to such objectification of identities and thus avoid the cultural practice of objectification of people. With this separation new opportunities emerge and a person is free to develop new relationships within and without. Externalising conversations also provide a way to recognise and manage the negative conclusions people make about their identity, based on perceived problems, and liberate them to explore “other territories of their lives.”

Therefore, if Christian counsellors use this approach it shows that they too are challenging and perhaps trying to change the dominant psychopathological framework that marks professional counselling and psychotherapy. White uses a number of other concepts to complement his approach, also reflected in interviews.

**Metaphors**

Metaphors are “highly significant” in the narrative approach. They reveal discourses invoked by someone’s understanding of life and identity. These discourses influence the actions people take in an effort to solve their problems. Lilly, Ethan and William illustrated their work with metaphors.

**Totalising**

White suggests therapists should be aware of, and not contribute to totalising problems. He defines totalising as: “defining problems in terms that are totally negative.” It is based on a
thought habit within Western culture to think dualistically i.e., in either/or manner.\textsuperscript{56} Lucas described this in his practice.

Re-authoring conversations

Re-authoring is a central theme of narrative practice,\textsuperscript{57} where narrative therapists question ideas about human nature, various assumed categories of personality or any supposed universal truths about identity. Re-authoring engages the ways people make meaning, given that meaning is not neutral but shapes lives through the stories created. Re-authoring does not look to replace or tinker with problem stories, challenge negative conclusions, re-frame, change interpretation, guide, evaluate, criticise or affirm but simply seeks to contribute to rich story development. Entry points to re-authoring conversations are: unique outcomes seen as “times of difference” or “sparkling moments” that contradict the dominant problem story; people’s intentions and skills that are mostly hidden because of the focus on the problem; and “absent but implicit” areas where narrative therapists expose people’s own expression of their life experiences and honour the intentions and dreams, visions and values and principles people treasure.\textsuperscript{58}

Conversations that highlight unique outcomes

Such conversations allow unexpressed life experiences to emerge and such storylines can serve as “unique outcomes” for the person seeking counsel. To achieve this a “decentred therapist consultation” is required. Unique outcomes is one of the most used and elaborated aspects of narrative therapy in interviewee practice. It supports or “privileges the authorship of the people seeking consultation.”\textsuperscript{59} To enable this, White used four categories of inquiry: “negotiation of a particular, experience-like definition of the unique outcome;” “mapping the effects of the unique outcome;” “evaluating the unique outcome and its effects;” “justifying the evaluation.”\textsuperscript{60} Interviewees did not detail such practice or integration, but these principles support their work.

\textsuperscript{56} White, Maps, 34-35.
\textsuperscript{57} Cramer, Narrative, 5.
\textsuperscript{59} White, Maps, 220.
\textsuperscript{60} White, Maps, 234-243.
Scaffolding conversations
In White's understanding of therapeutic practice “the therapist contributes significantly to the scaffolding of the proximal zone of development and recruits others to participate. This scaffolding enables incremental and progressive distancing from the known and familiar”\(^61\) and thus creates possibilities and opportunities for a new future. Scaffolding was used by participants, like Lilly and Jack. White developed “re-authoring conversations maps,” building on Jerome Bruner’s exploration of narrative metaphors and meaning-making activities in people’s everyday lives. He used charts to record story elements using two criteria, “Landscape of Identity” and “Landscape of Action,” that followed through on the historical points of “Remote History,” “Distant History,” “Recent History,” “Present” and “Near Future.”\(^62\)

Intentional state understandings
Such personal actions are not framed according to any self-concept. They “provide an account of” behaviours and choices, and instead of “representing actions as essences of his identity, these intentional understandings relate to broader considerations of life.”\(^63\)

Internal state understandings
Respondents engaged this approach which “portrays human action as a surface manifestation of specific elements or essences of a self that is to be ‘found’ at the centre of identity.” Internal state understanding allows human expressions to “be interpreted as a manifestation of any number of unconscious motives, instincts, needs, desires, drives, dispositions, personality traits, personal properties (like strengths and resources).”\(^64\)

Cabinets of the mind
White invites readers to imagine the landscape of identity “as composed of filing cabinets of the mind.”\(^65\) Each one represents a culturally relevant category of identity that includes

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\(^61\) White, *Maps*, 263.
\(^62\) White, *Maps*, 75-98.
\(^64\) White, *Maps*, 101.
internal and intentional state categories. Internal state categories are “unconscious needs, instincts, desires, drives, dispositions, personality traits, personal properties”, and intentional state categories are described as “purposes, aspirations, quests, hopes, dreams, visions, values, beliefs and commitments.” However, without using the same terminology, most of the interviewees explored categories of identity within the internal and intentional state categories described above. Interviewees simply described their practice in language that was “experience-near” to their context which is mostly in Christian and/or pastoral settings.

Re-membering conversations
Anthropologist Barbara Myerhoff, on whose work White builds, describes re-membering as a “special type of recollection” about “the figures who belong to one’s life story, one’s own prior selves” and about significant others. Re-membering is a “purposive” and “significant unification” which is different from the fragmentary and passive process of everyday consciousness. Narrative practitioner Barbara Wingard notes that we become stronger and our lives become easier when we reconnect in memory with those who cared about us and have seen us through “loving eyes.” This is clearly highlighted by Jack. In re-membering practice, life can be seen as a metaphor of a club with membership where people actively direct the processes in our human ongoing construction of reality. Re-membering supports deliberate acts of membership and offers practical ways of working with a collective and multi-voiced version of identity shaped through relationships. White explains re-membering as the conception that identity is founded upon an ‘association of life’ rather than on a core self. This association of life has a membership composed of the significant figures and identities of a person’s past, present, and projected future, whose voices are influential with regard to the construction of the person’s identity.

As memberships are exposed to re-membering conversations, they can be revised, upgraded or downgraded, honoured or revoked, and authority given to some voices, or disqualified,

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66 “It is into these filing cabinets of the mind that people file a range of conclusions about their own and each other’s identities. ... All these conclusions ... are shaping of life.” White, Maps, 106-107.
67 Cramer, Narrative, 9.
68 Cramer, Narrative, 9. Barbara Wingard is an Aboriginal narrative practitioner working with Aboriginal families and communities, teaching at the Dulwich Centre since 1994.
69 Cramer, Narrative, 10.
70 White, Maps, 129.
according “to matters of one’s personal identity.” Re-membering conversations are therefore not passive recollections but “purposive re-engagements with the history of one’s relationships with significant figures and the identities of one’s present life and projected future.”71 Data analysis noted that re-membering is significant, practical examples are given by interviewees, and the “club of life” metaphor emerged.

**Therapeutic documents**

Therapeutic documents record client’s quotes to honour their story. In narrative therapy, this is also viewed as “rescuing words” that validate experience. Olivia outlined this process.

**Definitional ceremonies and outsider-witness practices**

White acknowledges that definitional ceremonies are based on the work of a cultural anthropologist Barbara Myerhof.72 These principles create a context where people tell their stories in front of a group of other people. These “witnesses” amplify and thicken the preferred stories of the teller. An outsider witness group may be formed from: other professional therapists or team members; supportive members of a person’s life; people who have faced similar difficulties; and previous clients of the therapist.73 Outsider witness practice is specifically addressed by Chloe and Ethan. Definitional ceremonies provide “a context for rich story development.”74 White describes them as “rituals that acknowledge and ‘regrade’ peoples’ lives, unlike many contemporary rituals that judge and degrade people’s lives.”75 Enacting such ceremonies in therapy sessions allows people to tell or perform their life stories in front of an audience of “carefully chosen outsider witnesses” then receiving responses from outside witnesses who retell what they have heard or seen “by a specific tradition of acknowledgment.”76

There are two phases: the therapist interviews people as outsider witnesses listen and observe as an audience, then, when the time seems right, outsider witnesses switch position

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71 White, Maps, 129.
72 White, Maps, 180-184.
73 Cramer, Narrative, 13.
74 White, Maps, 165.
75 White, Maps, 165.
76 White, Maps, 165.
with the person in therapy. The person in therapy then becomes an audience and the second phase of “retelling” from the side of outsider witness begins. Retelling was described by Mia and Ruby, but not in Michael White’s structured way. They referred to non-specific, creative methods that enabled stories in a conversation: white board, drama and accidental narrative, acting, music and poetry, appreciative inquiry, empty chair work to interview the problem, working with social story and social scenarios and drawing, table games, toys such as duplo, memory games, box of treasures, journaling and discussing dreams.

Jack identified the technique of asking a “multiplicity of questions” to bolster and broaden the safety net for students and allow them to express their stories according to specifics of their own journey and faith language.

Michael White often does have that ‘multiplicity of questions approach’ where a person is invited to think about someone who has been influential in their life, perhaps someone at church or school, someone who has influenced your faith, someone who has impacted something they’re good at ... [allowing] people to enter conversation where they feel the energy to enter. They then explore and play with this and consider the good that has come out of that.

4.4.3 Integration of philosophical ideas, faith and theological aspects in practice
Several interviewees described Christianity as multi-storied with many types of Christianity, a fruitful arena for the integration of narrative ideas and postmodern philosophies. The data revealed that Narrative therapy is often explained as a way of life, a lifestyle and a way of being. In order to apply narrative practices one should consider the philosophy behind them, and language as a metaphor of narrative is a way of translating Christian faith into postmodern language. In other words, embracing narrative metaphor and the application of narrative practices in Christian pastoral care and counselling may serve as a mutual conversation point with the contemporary world. Common ground shared between various theologies and narrative ideas will be explored in the Discussion, but some theological aspects highlighted by interviewees will now be identified as integrational places.

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77 White, Maps, 186.
Christian and pastoral carers/counsellors may see themselves as encountering God in each person. This is based on the Christian belief that all people are made in the image of God and where the relational self is apparent in a Trinitarian understanding of God. For a Christian narrative practitioner Jesus may serve as an example for storytelling, teaching in parables, advocating against injustice and encouraging involvement in social action. The first two examples would be specific for a Christian context perhaps because they use stories in a more 'expert' way. Edward Wimberly illustrates this in his use of stories in the African context as described in the Literature Review. However, the third example about social justice and community engagement, I think, may comfortably sit with narrative ideas. Interviewees expressed many integrational aspects within the scope of Christian values, one example being the integration of the principle of 'loving our neighbour as ourselves' by treating those coming for counsel with respect, compassion, gentleness and kindness. Christian values in a narrative context means seeing clients in terms of hope, change and transformation rather than in terms of deficits. To apply narrative approaches means to live it as a lifestyle that embodies God's grace. A faith community may know God better than the individual so William’s challenge argues for communal rather than individual conversations with people – a theme addressed later in the Discussion. Olivia indicated that narrative practice removes blame and judgment as does Christianity. Jack offered the example of a gay person, describing those who suffer from ascribed blame and judgment. He asserted that narrative practices can help people re-author experiences of blame and judgement by finding one's own story, identity and value.

The fundamental Christian value of unconditional love links narrative therapy and Christianity. They can combine to integrate a common healing power (if non-Christian narrative practitioners agree with the terminology), genuinely experienced as a sense of release, the opening up of hope and the discernment of meaning. Narrative values of co-researching, learning from each other, acknowledged not-knowing and open curiosity may correlate well with Christian values even when expressed in a diversity of ways.

4.4.4 Specific integrative aspects

Interviewees mostly use narrative approaches in partnership with other therapies. Only two participants reported exclusive Narrative therapy use. The most common combination is with
cognitive behavioural therapies and a person-centred approach. The use of solution-focused therapy and emotionally focused therapy is also noted by interviewees. This research did not seek to explore such complementarities, therefore the responses offered are initiated by participants. For example, Oliver presented his unique work with parallel stories where stories are told to the conversational partner by the therapist, an approach perhaps best reflected in the work of Jorge Bucay, gestalt psychotherapist, psychodramatist and author from Argentina. The titles of his texts echo the themes of narrative work: “Let Me Tell You a Story: A New Approach to Healing through the Art of Storytelling” and “The Game of Stories.”

Interviewees identified a cultural challenge between narrative ideas and Christianity when a person coming for counsel expects a “Christian” counsellor to offer guidance or theological interpretation. In this context it takes time for the counsellor to co-create a “fellow traveller” rather than an “expert” role. If this is not challenged some comfortable Christian concepts like forgiveness and prayer may serve as colonising knowledge because of this lack of integration with narrative ideas. Jack feared that there might be a clash between a person’s story and truth, as developed using narrative principles, with the truth given by God and as written and interpreted by a faith community. He gave the example of a gay population trying to remain Christian or members of the Church. Yet for Ethan the same themes provide liberating metaphors that enable Christians to do “some very robust theological integration into the postmodern worldview context.” This topic will be further addressed in Discussion.

4.4.4.1 Integration of narrative practices specific to Christian context

Interviewees explored the use of general and “big” Bible stories like Genesis and Exodus, the stories that are in many cases also known to those outside Christianity. Jesus’ parables provide a good and useful example of creative resources in a faith context. Biblical stories may also be used to illustrate God’s work in a person’s life, to help unpack Christian experience and enable sharing or entering into faith journey stories. Bible stories can also challenge some dominant

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78 Questionnaire data: after the two most commonly integrated approaches noted above, Systemic family therapy, Biblical counselling, Psychodynamic approaches and Rational-emotive behavioural therapy are given significant importance, all of them over 50%. Various Trauma therapies and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy join the list, highlighting the eclectic style of respondents.

79 I discovered later that Oliver was not familiar with Bucay’s work.

80 See Chloe’s example in Interview Data Analysis.
knowledge. In all these cases it is possible for a Christian narrative practitioner to respectfully apply faith subjects within a Christian metanarrative and yet at the same time remain faithful to narrative ideas and principles. It becomes apparent that in a person’s search for meaning, Christian stories and experiences have a legitimate place, especially for a person who has already adopted a Christian identity.

Participants mostly favoured the specific use of New Testament stories where Jesus witnesses with his own example and words. As expected, interviewees found it easier to draw on Biblical subjects and stories with a Christian person. Integration within a faith context assumes that God may be viewed as a character in the person’s story, perhaps even used as an outsider witness in a conversation or as a character who helps in re-storying a person’s life. However, when Bible stories are used as metaphors they may also, if circumstances allow, be applied with a person who claims no faith. Some interviewees expressed their belief that there is no need for a “Christian” narrative therapy and that they apply the same narrative principles and ideas with a Christian or a non-Christian person.

Moving beyond the individual to a community context, participants gave examples of how conversations informed with narrative ideas may help in building church community and identity, create frameworks for preaching and narrative sermons, and help generally in organising church worship services.

### 4.4.5 Core elements for training, education and formation

Core elements for a model of education were explored in both interviews and questionnaire. What follows is a summary of the ideas and suggestions from both data sets.

#### 4.4.5.1 The context of education

Responses to question 10 established that Christian counsellors significantly prefer academic institutions as an educational setting (57.1%) or a Christian organisation specialising in practical training (53.1%) to a Church context (2.0%). Very few (3/50) preferred a combination of the first two or all of the three settings. The context of education should also be sensitive to individual needs and emphasise skill development. Some other contextual elements will emerge within the core elements of training, education or formation.
4.4.5.2 Core elements of practical training

Effective practical training requires inside and outside experience. Questionnaire respondents argued for practical experience outside the educational institution and in collaboration with churches. During the course of study, skills practice is recommended with other students and also with external clients. Respondents highlighted the importance of engaging different styles, techniques and methods in counselling as well as using practical skills like active listening, advanced empathy, questioning skills and motivational interviewing. Individual and group supervision were seen as core. This emphasis on learning within and through community should be enhanced by modelling and demonstration with optional video recording, role-plays and group sessions. Use of dyads and triads and outsider witness practice within a group was supported.

Participants concluded by asking for flexible skills in adjusting the teaching of narrative practice to postmodern society.

4.4.5.3 Core elements of educational theories

a. Content

Interviewees suggested that a wide range of theoretical knowledge was required for counselling education:

- Modernism
- Postmodernism
- Post-structuralism
- Humanism
- Human development
- Psychology
- Sociology
- Anthropology
- Social constructionism
- Philosophy of language
- General systems theory
- Theories of counselling and psychotherapy
- Medical neuroscience knowledge about the brain
Participants recommended teaching the philosophical basis of Narrative therapy and narrative practices in order to help them understand its language. Elements that should permeate practical skills knowledge include learning the particular therapy approach and use of examples and case studies as teaching methods. Education should also teach concepts of critical thinking and worldviews.

Many integrative aspects between Christianity and other knowledge systems are emphasised, each contributing to creative dialogue in three forms: philosophical, theological and practical intervention. It is important to enable integration of faith and practice and to demonstrate how particular modalities and counselling theories integrate with Christian values, culture, science, psychology, spirituality and faith. Participants should expect education to focus on: family systems; specific challenges of working in a secular environment; understanding mental health in a Christian context; how to apply redemptive truth, prayer and Scripture and focus on the Divine and the Holy Spirit; integrating inter-faith communication; learning about community development; comparing contemporary worldviews and Christian values, how to develop a Christian counselling framework; and aspects of spiritual supervision. Respondents argued for Scripture to be an integrating factor and emphasised the role of God in Christian counselling.

b. Ethics and legal issues
Ethics and legal issues were clearly identified as core elements in all three research phases. Questionnaire respondents would include: ethical and professional boundaries; professional codes of conduct; ethical considerations for Christian counsellors; learning requirements for setting up a counselling practice; and information on relevant legal issues; Christian ethics and a basic theological understanding of identity, relationships and ethics. Professional accreditation by recognised field bodies was essential.

c. Principles
Questionnaire respondents called for integrity in teaching using: practice-based theories rather than religious theories; real life scenarios and practice; and a focus on the best outcome for the client rather than just practicing psychotherapy models. They called for education to be non-judgmental, with no discrimination based on culture, status or issues presented. Even
if ethics at times are not consistent with Christian views, respect, support and care for the individual and responding to their issues should be prioritised. Theological principles should reflect a holistic approach embodying the hope of God’s presence.

Interviewees asked for principles of teaching to be adapted to individual student needs and include: teaching respect as well as witnessing; avoiding labels; highlighting the importance of the therapeutic relationship; empowering the other; embracing diversity in teaching and learning; counsellors becoming companions in the search for meaning; applying listening without judgment, being interested in the story; listening to the meaning behind the stories; always going back to the example of Christ; and helping people to open the doors of their stories. Counsellors would be expected to 'under-stand' or place themselves underneath the person and learn how to sit with their own uncertainty, a place where both teaching and counselling are a journey made together with enthusiasm, ethical transparency, fairness, de-centred use of language and no universal rules being applied to everyone.

4.4.5.4 Core elements of formation

Formational core elements noted by interviewees refer to: aspects of self-awareness and knowing one’s own story; confronting one’s own journey and making it a part of formation; role-play as a possible formational element in training; practicing individual counselling with other students as well as dyads and triads; integrating theology and the challenge of postmodern ideas; creating a safe educational space for the development of a personally chosen identity; modelling Christian identity in education and giving tools and skills to journey with others; forming a person’s identity to know themselves through narrative rather than through skills learned; encouraging students to do integration themselves and to experience what it's like to be in a client's shoes.

Importantly, education for Christian counsellors is also described as a personal faith journey with a necessary commitment to personal growth. Most of the research participants, in questionnaire and interview, recommended personal therapy for counselling students during the training/studying period. Question nine explored the need for personal counselling during counsellor education and a very high percentage of respondents (96%) believe it is necessary (Table Q15). This firmly established that 'truth' or 'taken-for-granted' knowledge about the
need for personal counselling in contemporary counsellor education is therefore statistically significant.

This statistical 'fact' however is especially interesting given that from a narrative point of view narrative self is something that is created or constructed again and again by the new stories that surround any new experience. An interesting question emerges. In order to become a professional counsellor what should be addressed through personal counselling if personal stories change according to new experiences, contexts and audiences? How much of that 'treatment' is enough for someone to be assessed as competent, healed or 'normal.' When does it end, and who determines this?

4.4.6 “Model” for training, education and formation of Christian and pastoral carers and counsellors

Participants discussed the “how” of an educational model. An initial reading list of books and articles would be supported by reading assignments discerned and selected during the course, and according to student group discussion. Secondly, written and oral assignments would focus on theological reflection, reflective writing and journaling. An action-reflection model of education is suggested, with sensitivity to issues of safety and over-control and with additional emphasis on legal and ethical issues.

The main theme of this research in relation to an educational model revolved around space. Focus group participants highlighted some of its core elements. The space is comfortable, physical, emotional, and a journey. It is a learning and teaching space for; sharing and exploring stories; vulnerability and honesty; walking with, instead of directing; empowering rather than having answers; unpacking to explicitly address; compassion, empathy, practice and reflection; defining spirituality and sacred story; respecting different faith languages; respecting and helping others; scaffolding; deconstructing, understood as the art of curiosity.

It is the space that challenges generations of stories; recovers stories and thickens them; frees people; contains anxieties and fears and offers safety; goes against the trend; reflects Jesus’ example; allows opening; allows chaos to occur and sits with chaos; allows people to go in their own chaotic directions; validates personal stories; lets things be rather than
deconstructs; develops hooks on which people can base things; enables people to become co-
journeymen; encourages their spirituality rather than their religion; helps people deconstruct
their faith stories and reconstruct them around their preferred faith identities; reconstructs
rather than deconstructs identity.

It is a space of trust, relationship, authenticity, time and ambiguity. It is a space where:
permission is given and asked; people can share their story; stories are welcomed regardless
of (in)completeness; space outside myself and my own space merge; lack of clarity is OK for a
while; doubt is OK; everyone has space to say - I’m not sure; teaching models a therapeutic
rather than an educational relationship; it is not about teaching but about helping people to
remember and to thicken and to value; all people come from a different space, and voice that
in the room. It is a space to be challenged, reminded, transformed, compassionate witness,
and with the freedom to sit quietly within it. It is a space to doubt yourself or voice things
safely because people respect and care for each other, let time be, help people not to learn
but remember, and where remembering grows and seeks new opportunities and
transformation. It is a space with a safety net which enables all people to have different stories
and still say 'this is mine.'

These elements of space may be used to shape a basic frame for the possible model that was
conceptualised at the centre of this research. They provide an organisational framework and
teaching principles for an educational model. They may also prompt introductory reading and
develop an invitational text for future students. Further aspects of training, education and
formation are addressed in the Discussion, at a philosophical rather than practical level, and
will build on the findings presented.
Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

Many have fallen by the edge of the sword, but not as many as have fallen because of the tongue. Happy is the one who is protected from it, who has not been exposed to its anger, who has not borne its yoke, and has not been bound with its fetters.\(^1\)

Sirach 28:18-19

In the mode of grounded theory this chapter seems to emerge and identify itself as a step towards an integrated theory for those who would seek to practice as narrative therapists within a Christian tradition. It focuses on three main areas: The integration of Christian theologies and narrative ideas; General aspects of narrative practice integration and aspects specific to the Christian and pastoral context; Imagining a model of training, education and formation of Christian and pastoral carers/counsellors which is described as 'space.'

Although the ‘model’ is discussed as a third item, elements mentioned under the first two are relevant to the educational model given that participants, especially from the focus group, suggested that training should reflect a therapeutic rather than an educational relationship. Therefore all integrational aspects of narrative practices may be reflected at some stage of training.

5.1 Christian theologies and narrative ideas – shared ground

Thomas O’Connor claimed: “Little has been written on spirituality and narrative therapy. However, narrative therapy has many commonalities with Judeo-Christian spiritualities.”\(^2\)

Integration between theology and narrative practices is indicated by participants in all three research phases: questionnaire, interviews and focus group. This developed from the context of the participants’ personal experiences. A relationship to Christian values and spirituality emerged as “natural territory” for such integration, perhaps because they reflect the content of counselling conversations rather than strictly theological themes. However, in my view there is a broader and richer base of themes and interests common to both Christian theologies and narrative ideas. The fact that theology was inherently but less obviously discussed by the participants is the rationale for the following survey.

\(^1\) New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition (NRSVCE)

The primary common ground between Narrative therapy and Christian theology is found in terminology shared with narrative theology, a factor already outlined in the Literature Review. However there are also many interests and themes in common with other theologies. This survey will hopefully invite Christian narrative practitioners, alone or with others, to explore some of these landscapes. A number of the ideas may be disturbing for some but they simply represent human experiences in various contexts. Even the notion of ‘disturbing’ would be interesting to investigate. Are theologies of people\(^3\) permissible, or are the real theologies only those of experts, and anchored in big, strong and historical\(^4\) church traditions? Are they true equals or just an exercise in tolerance? Whatever the answer, this research prompts the idea that theologies should be in the service of human liberation as well as salvation.

The following discussion serves that purpose and also embraces Christian narrative conversation. In the theoretical part and when explaining the common grounds between different Christian theologies and narrative therapy, this researcher finds there are many aspects of narrative therapy that are compatible with Christian values, spirituality and theology. Yet because hypotheses can only be validated by statistically valid quantitative research and because, in the case of this research, the number of survey responses may be rather small, it may be suggested that: the first hypothesis (that many aspects of narrative therapy ideas are compatible with Christian values, spirituality and theology), is confirmed in theory but not entirely through the quantitative data of this research. The same rationale may apply also to the second hypothesis (that many aspects of narrative therapy may serve as an enriching concept for the field of Christian and pastoral counselling.) Narrative therapy ideas may be theoretically seen as an enriching concept for the field of Christian and pastoral counselling as a source of new ideas for practical application within the larger field of pastoral practices. Additional practice support comes from this researcher’s personal experience when lecturing on this topic to pastoral studies students, when working with student’s case studies, and further, based upon the personal statements made by interviewees as will be demonstrated in the data analysis and discussion. In all these cases the positive impact might have been noticed, observed, experienced or heard about. However, again from the

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\(^3\) A notion of “theology of the people” appears also in communications from Pope Francis.

\(^4\) What would be – not-historical?
perspective of only the quantitative research validity, this hypothesis may not be so strongly proved or this conclusion might not appear so obvious.

5.1.1 Contextual theologies
Angie Pears notes an important difference between theology that is contextual, and contextual theology. “One is a theological stance which places and celebrates context at the centre of the theological enterprise, and the other is an epistemological claim about the contextual nature of all theology.”5 Therefore, contextual theology “explicitly places the recognition of the contextual nature of theology at the forefront of the theological process”6 and reflects the experiences of a particular environment or believer group. Latin-American liberation theologies, feminist theologies, African and North American black theologies, Ecotheology, Minjung theology, and Palestinian theology might head the list,7 and developing movements such as queer theologies will continue to spring up. Liberation theologies, as perhaps the best known among them, developed as a response to economic, political and social injustice and to specific contexts of oppression such as poverty, colonialism, sexism, homophobia and militarism.8 Most interesting is the use of language. Many times contextual theologies will use the plural, “theologies,” rather than the singular, “theology,” emphasising diversity and valuing the specific experiences and equality of all. A key issue in contextual theology “is that of identity and tradition and the relationship between the particular and the universal.”9 The same sentence, it seems, may also accurately describe narrative practices within a Christian context or even wider.

Stephen Bevans outlines six models of contextual theology. Alternative descriptors are noted in brackets.10 1) The translation model (adaptation or accommodation) focuses on translation of the meaning of doctrines into other cultural contexts and “on Christian identity within a particular context ... to preserve continuity with the older and wider tradition.”11 2) The

5 Angie Pears, Doing Contextual Theology (New York: Routledge, 2010), 1.
6 Pears, Doing Contextual, 1.
8 Pears, Doing Contextual, 166.
9 Pears, Doing Contextual, 173-174.
11 Bevans, Models, 70.
anthropological model (indigenization or ethnographic) uses insights from anthropology to centre on the value, goodness and experience\textsuperscript{12} of the person and highlights “the identity of Christians within a particular context ... to develop their unique way of articulating faith.”\textsuperscript{13} 3) The praxis model, (situational theology, theology of the signs of the time, or liberation) focuses on “the identity of Christians within a context particularly as that context is understood in terms of social change.”\textsuperscript{14} 4) The synthetic model (dialogical or analogical) is at the centre of the continuum as a balancing point “midway between emphasis on the experience of the present (ie. context, experience, culture, social location, social change) and the experience of the past – scripture, tradition.”\textsuperscript{15} 5) The transcendental model (subjective) “is not about producing a particular body of any kind of texts” but “about attending to the affective and cognitive operations in the self-transcending subject” so it’s not a particular theology that is important, but the theologian her, or himself who should operate as an “authentic” and “converted subject.”\textsuperscript{16} 6) The countercultural model (encounter, engagement, prophetic, contrast or confessional) engages the context with utmost seriousness. This model “recognises that human beings and all theological expressions only exist in historically and culturally conditioned situations” where “that context always needs to be treated with a good deal of suspicion” and that gospel, in order to take root in people’s context, has to “challenge and purify that context.”\textsuperscript{17}

This last model echoes Jack’s remark that there is space for the church and Christians to “challenge back” the dominant knowledges of our time from within a Christian perspective. In my view (from my point of view, or in my opinion), all the models share common ground with narrative ideas and especially the anthropological, praxis and transcendental models. Perhaps the exceptions would be the translation model, which may still occasionally impose some colonising knowledge even with all good intentions, and the countercultural model, if challenging, (challenged?) turns into an urge to ‘win souls.’

\textsuperscript{12} Bevans, \textit{Models}, 55.
\textsuperscript{13} Bevans, \textit{Models}, 70.
\textsuperscript{14} Bevans, \textit{Models}, 70.
\textsuperscript{15} Bevans, \textit{Models}, 88.
\textsuperscript{16} Bevans, \textit{Models}, 103.
\textsuperscript{17} Bevans, \textit{Models}, 117.
Matheny describes the theological interpretation of cultural memory as Christian wisdom at work. Cultures, societies and communities avoid oblivion by remembering, and they labour to construct memories “against the disappearance and forgetfulness of meaning and identity.” Language is inseparable from the content of memory and as a tool for stories and meaning-making is also carefully considered in narrative practices. Matheny writes that language in its written and oral form “serves the public memory of cultures as they strive for meaning” and it makes authority in society visible “by structuring its display.” Public memory “creates monuments” within cultural space “for the conveyance of wisdom and knowledge.” In Christian communities the language of faith speaks of the past in order to prepare for the future and by fostering public memory for each particular faith community in order to elude what Gustavo Gutierrez calls “the violence of forgetfulness.” Contextual theology, explains Matheny, is constructed not in terms of particular problems like systematic and scholastic theology that may become artificial, but according to the reality and praxis of community living. This resonates strongly with practical and/or pastoral theology in an everyday context but also very much mirrors the “atmosphere” of how this research project has described and defined narrative practices. Therefore praxis informs theory, and faith community practices shape and articulate problems thus creating what interviewees identified as the space for integration with narrative ideas. In this way “pastoral practices of a church, as well as its history, traditions, memories, and the experiences of both the theologian and the community are elements of theological reflection that always inform the theoretical part of theological work.”

For Sigurd Bergmann contextual theology is the interpretation of Christian faith according to the special context where there are no universal theologies that work independently of such a context. Seemingly, this may open spaces for theological deconstruction or the reconstruction of grand narratives within Christianity and address more relevantly and accurately the local and actual needs and experiences, but not without threatening

19 Matheny, Contextual, 53-54.
20 Matheny, Contextual, 57-58.
21 Matheny, Contextual, 58.
established ‘truths.’ Contextual theology seriously considers the social construction of reality, as do narrative practices and, as Bergmann points out, knowledge of the social and cultural sciences is “an important challenge to theology that it should no longer avoid.” Bergmann adds a contextual theology model to the six suggested by Bevans – the human ecological model. While it is a synthesis it is not merely a combination of previous models. It accentuates what they overlook and highlights “the signification of the Creator, the place and the physical world for theology.” This provides clear links to narrative-pastoral therapy where, as Truter and Kotze argue, we have to “give God’s voice a prominent place in conversations with clients/patients” and, as the data indicated, speak in favour of Narrative therapy as an expression of a contextual theology. They provide a valuable summary of a number of the data themes when they state that ethical values are embodied in narrative approaches when they emphasise people’s life-giving power and potential, instead of their life-denying power. This life-giving potential can only be revealed when people who feel excluded are treated with respect, love and inclusion. As a form of pastoral action, a narrative therapeutic approach fits well with a contextual theology. Narrative therapy gives expression to a contextual theology by centralising clients’ and patients’ stories, and by not reducing these people to being the passive recipients of expert professionals’ theoretical and classification systems, be they medically or theologically based. The storytelling of clients and patients in their own voices and according to their own experiences centralises their own contexts and does not confine them to external theoretical and classification systems. Narrative therapy that centralises people’s own contexts through their storytelling is therefore a meaningful way of giving expression to a contextual theology.

Some specific theologies offer rich points of connection, dialogue and synergy with narrative.

5.1.1.1 Local theologies, Regional theologies and Little theologies

In the Foreword of Schreiter’s book on local theologies Edward Schillebeeckx notes that “the great Christian tradition” consists of a series of “local theologies” and that therefore “theologizing today also has to deal with the problem of a ‘culture shock’ and not merely with

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the analysis and comparison of theological concepts."26 Local theologies, explains Schreiter, bring a shift in perspective with the localization, contextualization, indigenization and inculturation of theology.27

It takes dynamic interaction of all three of these roots – gospel, church, culture – with all they entail about identity and change, to have the makings of local theology. Both living spirit and the network of traditions that make up living communities need to be taken into account.28

Clemens Sedmak identified “fifty theses for doing local theology.” The commentary below, offering narrative observations, selects those most relevant for to this research and, I believe, moves towards a framework for a theology of narrative therapy.29

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quote</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>THESIS 2: Theology is done locally... takes the particular situation seriously... can be done with basic theological means. ... done by the people, and with the people.”</td>
<td>Reflected also in Pope Francis’ understanding of theology and his agency.</td>
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<td>THESIS 4: Theology talks about life...”</td>
<td>See metaphors of life.</td>
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<td>THESIS 6: There are many ways of doing theology...”</td>
<td>Lilly and others highlighted this aspect significantly.</td>
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<tr>
<td>THESIS 7: Since doing theology is as natural as walking and talking, we all do theology, both as individuals and as a community...”</td>
<td>Sedmak argues, however, about the difference between “trained” and “untrained” theologians.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THESIS 8: ... always done from a certain perspective within a particular context.”</td>
<td>Already a known claim from contextual theologies.</td>
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<tr>
<td>THESIS 9: Many different images capture the work of a theologian. ... theologians as village cook. ... like cooking with local ingredients.”</td>
<td>“Cooking with local ingredients” aligns with the description of narrative practices.</td>
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<tr>
<td>THESIS 14: Jesus did ‘situational theology.’ ... an invitation to do ‘leaflet theology’ rather than ‘book-length theology.’’</td>
<td>This aspect would embrace “experience near,” naming and describing in narrative practices.</td>
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<tr>
<td>THESIS 15: Doing theology as Jesus did is a community-building enterprise.”</td>
<td>Community narrative practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THESIS 16: Jesus did theology ... ‘as if people matter’.”</td>
<td>Respect for people’s stories as expressed in narrative practice.</td>
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<tr>
<td>THESIS 26: ... expressions of God’s continual creation ... begins with the human situation ... a ‘second step.’ The human situation has a cultural face. The concept</td>
<td>Very much in line with practical theology. Narrative practices begin with “the human situation” rather than with theories about them – both humans and situations.</td>
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27 Schreiter, Constructing, 1.
28 Schreiter, Constructing, 21.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>THESIS 27: … We do theology because we are inevitably faced with burning questions of life (beginning, end, purpose, choices). Everybody … develops ‘implicit theologies,’ which can be dangerous and should be made explicit for the sake of the community.”</th>
<th>Corresponds to the narrative idea of “absent but implicit.” Similarly, the influence of “colonising knowledges.” The next thesis explains more.</th>
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<tr>
<td>THESIS 28: A way to unveil biases or to trace hidden values and implicit theologies is through the use of stories … ambiguous situations with actors … different value systems. ‘Value stories’ are a useful theological tool … which actors are justified in acting the way they do?”</td>
<td>Exploring such “value stories” is a narrative practice specific to the Christian and pastoral care and counselling context.</td>
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<tr>
<td>THESIS 29: … a dialogue between our understanding of theology and our concept of culture: Theology reflects upon culturally embedded forms of religious life.”</td>
<td>Cf. narrative conversations on aspects of faith and culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THESIS 30: … pay attention to the particularities of local language. Concepts … reveal a culture’s way of seeing the world. Concepts convey value systems. An elementary linguistic analysis is a useful tool for local theologies. Using local language is a sign of respect for the local culture.”</td>
<td>The same respect is shown to the person when searching for “experience near” descriptions of people’s experiences in their own terms and “local language.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THESIS 31: Culture can be analysed by looking at cultural activities. … any identifiable context is a cultural game. … Who is playing which cultural games? According to which rules? When and where? Why? Asking these questions systematically is a useful tool for local theologies.”</td>
<td>Reflecting narrative inquiry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THESIS 32: Certain cultural game … connected to a cultural story, connected to a cultural worldview… new cultural games are always and necessarily connected with the introduction of new cultural stories. Religions touch upon the deepest cultural layers, upon the worldviews. That is why cultural stories are especially important within the context of doing local theology.”</td>
<td>What about exploring “cultural stories” in narrative practices? With Christians? With everybody?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THESIS 33: … recognize that theology takes shape within a particular context. Theologies are developed in response to and within a particular social situation.”</td>
<td>Local knowledge in narrative practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THESIS 34: … always done within a concrete local social structure that provides rich resources for constructing local theologies and for developing a local identity as a theologian.”</td>
<td>Social, historical, cultural, political context etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>THESIS 36: … called to analyse social realities. … clear limits to social analysis. We can see these limits when we consider the mystical dimensions in our lives.”</td>
<td>This connects all theologies mentioned in this survey with apophatic theology. Social engagement intertwined with highly metaphysical and</td>
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transcendental themes. Because it is the span of human experience. From sounds, words, names, language, stories, images, rituals, physical movements to experiences beyond that in silence and un-saying. All that is part of narrative conversations in various Christian and pastoral care and counselling contexts.

THESIS 37: Regional theologies try to do justice to the key features of a regional context.”

What about “regional” narrative practices?

THESIS 38: Little theologies are theologies made for a particular situation, taking particular circumstances into account, using local questions and concerns, local stories and examples as starting point. People should be able to recognise themselves in little theologies.”

“Little theologies,” resonates with narrative practices and pastoral encounters.

THESIS 39: Constructing little theologies is a challenging task that demands cultural sensitivity, through knowledge, and respect for people ... not ‘bumper-sticker theologies.”

Cultural sensitivity is “demanded” also in Narrative therapy.

THESIS 40: Little theologies called to three tasks: (1) point to the positive richness and goodness of local contexts; (2) challenge the local context by inviting people to see and go beyond its limits; and (3) inspire and encourage by opening eyes to previously unseen visions and ears to unheard sounds. Little theologies invite people to do theology themselves. When little theologies function properly, they empower.”

Little theologies seek to empower people and, as interviewee Jack said, “challenge back” the dominant knowledges – these are common places for narrative practices too.

THESIS 41: Little theologies arise in concrete occasions and in response to specific needs; ... often evoked by simple questions. As personal answers to personal questions and particular reactions to local concerns, ... developed face to face without using ‘canned’ answers. ... requires - the ability to listen and learn, sensitivity to the realities of the concrete situation and basic knowledge of the gospel.”

This almost describes a “methodology” for narrative practices in a Christian and pastoral context.

THESIS 42: Little theologies look at the details of our lives ... from a theological perspective, weighing alternative ways of dealing with these details, reflecting on how to approach life theologically. ... both a task and a spiritual challenge.”

Narrative therapy listens for “sparkling moments” and details that make a difference in a person’s dominant story.

THESIS 43: Little theologies arise in concrete occasions and places.”

As narrative conversations do.

THESIS 44: Little theologies invite us to look at details, an art that has to be cultivated. Details in our lives or the lives of others, details in a text, can be the basis for illuminating little theologies. Little theologies highlight details by making simple observations.”

Somehow a very similar idea to listening for unique outcomes and “sparkling moments” in narrative practices.

THESIS 45: Little theologies use local sources of knowledge relevant for dealing with people’s lives

Appears almost as a “theological” explanation of community narrative practices.
theologically. Ingredients ... can be found in local rituals and everyday language, local songs and proverbs, buildings and works of art. ... means doing 'theological field work,' living with the people and listening to their voices.”

**THESIS 46:** Little theologies can be developed around images rooted in the local culture. ... The use of images as a theological tool is an invitation to be creative.”

**Another example of appreciating a local knowledge.**

**THESIS 47:** Little theologies ... proverbs as their ingredients. ... flavour of local experience and values. ... honor and utilize the wisdom contained in proverbs. They reflect on this wisdom in the light of gospel values.”

Using proverbs may suggest interesting additional questions when exploring landscapes of identities around values and principles. E.g., Do you remember some proverbs or sayings from your family, friends, relatives, or your community, society and country, or your living context? What do they mean to you or do they describe what is important, precious or significant to you?

**THESIS 48:** Little theologies can be developed using stories and examples. Stories connect to people's experience. ... depth and authenticity that can be communicated, shared, and remembered. ... reveal who people are. ... an essential element in building community. It takes subtlety, intuition, and sensitivity to choose the right local stories and then tell them well.”

The essence of narrative practice.

**THESIS 49:** Doing theology entails cultivating the art of hope; it promotes a hopeful culture.”

See: 'Narrative Therapy in Practice: The Archaeology of Hope.' Hope is emphasised in Andrew Lester’s work in the Literature Review. The following thesis quote confirms this.

**THESIS 50:** Theology is an expression of the hope that a few people can make a difference. Theology cultivates the art of hoping.”

Perhaps some aspects of narrative practices may also be described as the "art of hoping."

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<tr>
<th>Table D1. Relations between local theologies, regional theologies and little theologies with narrative ideas and practices.</th>
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**5.1.2 Feminist and relational theologies**

This discussion will argue that feminist and relational theologies offer many places of mutual encounter, and share a good deal of common ground with narrative practices. There is an emphasis on relationship, divine or human or other, and a focus on living and human experiences. They search for that experience in the world of language but also beyond, in the creative arts, ceremonies and theologies that go even further in un-saying. I see these theologies searching for the place where descent of the Word into world meets ascent of the human to the Divine. While feminist and relational theologies share a number of common
interests and although it is largely beyond the scope of this research to explore them all, some invite further enquiry.

Pamela Dickey Young highlights the main areas of feminist theory as: analysis of sexuality, socialisation, production or paid and unpaid work, reproduction and child rearing, and patriarchal constructions of “woman” that serve as “the catalyst for theological reflection in economic, social, political, and cultural terms.” Feminist critique suggests that traditional theology is patriarchal, written almost totally by men and for men: “... theology has been created, in Western culture, in a patriarchal social structure that shapes its ideas and gives an aura of ‘rightness’ and a social sanction to the ecclesiastical status quo.” There is general agreement that women also have to become theologians and “must question the patriarchal mind-set that grants legitimacy to traditional theologizing.” In that context, women’s experience becomes a source and a norm for theology and is “necessary but not sufficient” without (as in ‘outside’, or ‘lacking’) a Christian tradition. Young’s dialogical approach affirms the relationship between the feminist and Christian norms by arguing that they are “always applied together” and “are not in a war with each other.” She pinpoints the dilemma: “It is not a relationship of adversaries but one of complementary principles. It is only when they are taken as adversaries that arguments over which takes precedence arise.”

As this discussion chapter explores theological integration with narrative ideas these norms may foreshadow some uneasy places. However, questioning norms is crucial for deconstructing psychopathology when ‘medical norms’ are applied to mental health. We are therefore curious: According to whose knowledge and to which norm is someone diagnostically proclaimed mentally ill?

How is a Christian narrative practitioner supposed to do theological integration when infinitely varied human experiences and numerous local contexts are expressed in contemporary theologies? Perhaps Young’s reflection on the relationship between experience, feminist and

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31 Young, Feminist, 15.
32 Young, Feminist, 17.
33 Young, Feminist, 82. Italics by Young.
34 Young, Feminist, 92.
Christian theology, and “shifting the weight in search of equilibrium” may provide a guiding thought:

If woman’s experience is not taken seriously, theology is incredible in its claims to be adequate Christian theology; if the tradition is not taken seriously, theology is inappropriate in its claims to be adequate Christian theology. ... One must keep shifting the weight in a search of equilibrium. There are various ways in which the weight can be redistributed. The aim is to carry the burden toward one’s goal rather than to be so weighted down by it that one cannot move.35

Serene Jones suggests “a feminist remapping of sin” be developed according to women’s experiences and with special consideration given to the five faces of oppression against women. Discussion should include “false identities” and “unfaithful identities” constructed in de-formative ways by destructive cultural and institutional forms or by the absence of normative structures.36 Jones explains that feminist theology “articulates the Christian message in language and actions that seek to liberate women and all persons” and how that goal “cannot be disentangled from the central truth of the Christian faith as a whole.”37 This suggests that feminist theory and its critical method can “help us better understand how cultural constructions of gender have affected the development of Christian thought and practice over the centuries into the present.”38 This exploration will inevitably encounter Foucault’s notions of power-knowledge that share similar concerns and can naturally set up a conversation with narrative practices.

Natalie K. Watson argues that feminist theology doesn’t seek to be another “voice represented at the table of patriarchy” nor does it advocate for “the complete separation of women from men.” Rather, as with narrative principles, feminist theologians seek to transform “theological concepts, methods, language, and imagery into a more holistic theology as a means and an expression of the struggle for liberation.”39 Without using theological language the aim of transformation partners well with narrative therapy approaches whether it’s individual, children, couple, family or community. Feminist theologies

35 Young, Feminist, 95.
37 Jones, Feminist, 14.
38 Jones, Feminist, 15.
also use a similar method of exploring tradition, history (Christian) and issues of text (Scripture) and culture.

Young also noted that feminist theology “draws on the broader project of feminist theory.”

Similarly, according to Cheryl White, narrative therapy looked to feminist ideas for its evolution.

The 1980s was a time of profound feminist challenge. Epston and I, Michael and David were all vitally engaged with and influenced by the feminist issues of that time. Everything was up for questioning: the gender roles in families; the practices of mother-blaming; the concept of ‘schizophrenogenic mothers’; gender inequities in the field of family therapy; male-centred language; heterosexual dominance; the politics of representation, and so on.

An obvious integration point between Christian theology and narrative ideas finds expression in the same curiosity described by Cheryl White. This challenge of the dominant knowledge of culture and society’s power structures may be found in feminist and relational theologies. I believe they invite the Christian and pastoral carer and counsellor to also explore our theological maps by using narrative practices to pan for gold, seeking what it means to be Christ-alive and Christ-alike in the world today and finding ways we can share that journey in relation to all others. Perhaps the flecks of gold will be found in relational theology which Lisa Isherwood and Elaine Bellchambers believe has many starting points, but they appear to turn traditional Christian theologies on their head, asserting, as they do, that it is between us and through our experiences that we intuit the God we profess to believe in who is within and among us. This is a form of theological thinking that gives agency to all living things and the cosmos itself and by so doing places all existing models of theology and even notions of divine within a new frame for reflection. Any theoretically formed theologies can be nothing more than starting-points and no longer seen as the assured end-points against which all human experiences is measured. Rather, the lived experience of women, men and the cosmos becomes the stuff of ever-emerging and changing forms of theological reflection. Fixed ends and ultimate truths so easy to declare in the light of the Word becoming flesh are transformed in the crucible of the fresh becoming word – an ever-changing word, as the realities of life unfold and spiral.

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40 Young, Feminist, 11.
So yes, feminist and relational theologies might challenge many of our comfortable theological places, as indeed life can. Therefore, if we allow this “lived experience of women, men and cosmos” to come into focus in our narrative explorations rather than emphasising expert theories, perhaps that may bring something good or at least real to our theologies as well. Perhaps we may then also offer better service for people who seek support in care and counselling contexts. Feminist theologians may be accused of giving too much power to humans while at the same time seriously diminishing Christology and theism. Isherwood and Bellchambers illustrate this tension when applied to the relationship between professional psychotherapy and pastoral counselling.

This simply illuminates the way in which divine/human power has been framed under patriarchy – a system that has at its heart a scarcity model which exerts its neurosis over many aspects of theological thinking. The idea that power shared may be power increased could not be contemplated under this system and so the power of God has been made absolute and untouchable.43

Contemporary knowledge has humans as research object or subject. Psychology, psychotherapy, psychoanalysis, sociology and anthropology may also reflect this absoluteness and unteachableness, most recently focused on in discussion about the selves and psychopathology. It seems that those powerful sciences operate within a patriarchal system of thinking and colonise people’s lives with new language about the phenomenon researched. The “power shared” fits well as one way of describing the non-expert stance of a narrative practitioner. Of course, that aspect is not exclusive to narrative therapy. Other approaches, particularly the person-centred or client-centred approach, share the same idea. However, for the purposes of this research “power shared” emerged as a crucial idea especially in conversations about educational space. This space is fundamentally defined as a co-creation of all involved and is the basis of shared power, which in this case particularly resonates with “knowledge” in Foucauldian terms.

Without making any exclusive claim, a narrative practitioner working in a Christian context can create a sympathetic space for exploring cosmic themes and theological meanings if a person of faith or a seeker is interested.

43 Isherwood, Introduction, 3.
As we expand our tent to include the whole cosmos in our theological ponderings, we offer ourselves a bigger range of possibilities in which to understand our hitherto rather narrowly configured doctrines and scriptures. Relational theologies through their embrace of lived diversity as a starting-point for the creation of theology allows for a fuller engagement with the deep mystery of incarnation – incarnation not narrowed by anthropocentric thinking and theorizing.44

Therefore, relational theologies search for personal experience of near encounters with the mystery of incarnation rather than strengthening already existing doctrines. It is curious what meaning that might have for each person and how this may be storied in the context of a person’s life.

Carter Heyward writes that in our lives and work we discover places where people in earlier times arrived before us, and still today “countless voices speak to us through their particular experiences and memories.”45 Heyward writes that we “stand where we do because others have shown us something, or will show us something one day, that will make us more responsive participants in the ongoing communal dance that transcends and transgresses cultural, religious, gender and generational boundaries, and time itself.”46 I find that these insights from relational theology have much in common with a social constructivist understanding of the world and the important influences that context and history have on the person. All this is readily perceived as built-in when we do research into the basis of narrative practices. Heyward uses words to describe relational theology that can also serve to describe applied narrative practices in a Christian setting where its task is not to understand but rather to develop

a poetry that sparks and spins us, through our experiences, imaginations and cognitive faculties, through what we do well, what we do poorly and what we do not at all, through what we see and what we do not see, what we say and what we do not say. Relational theology is a poetry that invites us to live more fully in right-relation to one another in this world at this time.47

44 Isherwood, Introduction, 3.
46 Heyward, Breaking, 12.
47 Heyward, Breaking, 10.
And what about other depths of the inexhaustible reservoir of interpretations and meanings within relationships and relational theology? I find therein numerous landscapes that can be explored in narrative conversations and in a Christian context. In such conversations, whether we explore epistemologically (how we know what we know) or agnostologically (how we don’t know what we don’t know), we explore relationships. Heyward, responding to questions about relational theology, would often say “Relational theology? Is there any other kind?” Some ideas from relational theologies are intertwined with apophatic theology, but these will be addressed later.

5.1.3 Theologies of language – Metaphorical theology

Narrative therapy is cautious and sensible with the use of language and many aspects of theology and language are analysed in the literature review. At this point of the discussion we will only address one, metaphorical theology. It provides a natural point of connection for Christian and pastoral carers and counsellors. Sallie McFague “attempted to chart a course from religious language – the language of images and metaphors – to theological language – the language of models and concepts.” McFague states that “all our language about God is but metaphors of experiences of relating to God” and therefore “we are free to use many models of God” with awareness that relationship with God cannot be named and that models of God should not be absolutized. She highlights two contexts of religious language – worship and interpretation. Two issues that emerge from both of these contexts are idolatry of such language (language about God taken literally as in some fundamentalist movements) or irrelevance of such language to many people as in the rejection of Western religious tradition by women, black or third world people. Metaphor, says McFague, “is ordinary language” and “the way we think” wherein lies the recording of “facts” alien to biblical consciousness. “The ancients were less literalistic than we are, aware that truth has many levels and that when one writes the story of an influential person’s life, one’s perspective will colour that story.”

It seems that “the ancients” intuitively knew a great deal about what would emerge as

48 Heyward, Breaking, 9.
50 McFague, Metaphorical, 194.
51 McFague, Metaphorical, 3-4, 193.
52 McFague, Metaphorical, 16.
53 McFague, Metaphorical, 5.
postmodernism, multi-storiedness and the influence an audience has on creating stories. Metaphorical theology develops and builds upon feminist theologies by exploring and proposing a new God-language and imagery for a theology that is more suitable to current world needs. Its ideas are welcomed by and also invite Christian and pastoral narrative practitioners to initiate conversations about new God-languages within their caring or counselling encounters. This challenge is real and immediate for practitioners and teachers of narrative approaches.

5.1.4 Theology of liberation/Liberation theology
A theology of liberation, as Gustavo Gutiérrez explains, embraces the poor and oppressed and is committed to abolishing injustices and building a new society, even a new humankind. It intercedes for liberation from every form of exploitation and seeks to help create a more humane and dignified life. It also advocates for every individual voice and Gutiérrez strongly states his challenge that

in the last instance we will have an authentic theology of liberation only when the oppressed themselves can freely raise their voice and express themselves directly and creatively in society and in the heart of the People of God, when they themselves ‘account for hope,’ which they bear, when they are the protagonists of their own liberation.54

Working from the data, this is clearly in line with narrative practice that empowers the position of conversational partners where they are the experts in their own story. Co-creating space enables them to voice their story and language it in the way they find most appropriate.

Liberation theology, explains Christopher Rowland, finds its roots in the everyday lives of ordinary people who experience poverty, and the interpretation of Scripture is related to that same experience. It is theology that starts from people’s insights as they experience life struggles coming out of poverty, deprivation and injustice.55 Therefore for liberation theologians, “faith runs parallel to real life,”56 and invites a pattern of theological reflection that mirrors narrative practice. Personal life situations have priority in liberation theologies.

56 Rowland, The Cambridge, 3.
For Maduro, life “comes first, theology comes only thereafter, striving to understand and serve life.”\(^{57}\) As clearly outlined in the literature review and reflected in the data, one of the main metaphors in narrative community practices uses the metaphors: Tree of Life, Kite of Life, Team of Life, River of Life, Bicycle of Life, Rhythm of Life. For Rowland liberation theology is not “the accumulation of, or learning about, a distinctive body of distinctive information” but “is above all a new way of doing theology rather than being itself a new theology.”\(^{58}\) It is “a way, a discipline, an exercise which has to be lived rather than acquired as a body of information” and “one can only learn about it by embarking on it”\(^{59}\) as a journey of discovery.

We know about the concept of “absent but implicit” from Narrative therapy and similarly, liberation theology addresses “the presence of the absent,” namely, the poor, the marginalised and the oppressed who, for Gutierrez, are those who were long “absent” from the Church and society and now continue to make themselves “present.” The absence was not physical but it was “those who have had scant or no significance, and who therefore have not felt (and in many cases still do not feel) in a position to make plain their suffering, their aspirations and their hopes.”\(^{60}\) Rowland draws on the Brazilian example.

The experience of celebration, worship, varied stories and recollections, in drama and festival, characterises the kind of theology worked out in Basic Christian Communities. It is an oral theology in which story, experience and biblical reflection are intertwined with the community’s life of sorrow and joy, reflecting the Scriptures themselves which are the written deposit of a people bearing witness to their story of oppression, bewildered and longing for deliverance. The Bible has become a lens through which one might read the story of today and thereby lend it a new perspective.\(^{61}\)

If we align this principle with narrative therapy the Brazilian example invites two things: To think about or explore similar communities as the space for people to “live” rather than being in segregated “treatment” for mental health disorders or suchlike; Bible stories may be read

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and shared even without a firm religious frame as “stor[ies] of today” that speak to people’s current everyday experiences. Isn’t that all that ‘efficient’ Christianity has done so far anyway? Leonardo and Clodovis Boff construct playful language around theological concepts such as “com-passion” expressed as “suffering with,” liberating action which is “liber-action” and “theo-logical” motivation (on God’s part) as a reason for “the option for the poor.” Boff describes pastoral liberation theology as the theology “that sheds the light of the saving word of the reality of injustice so as to inspire the church to struggle for liberation.” It shares the same root with liberation theology in evangelical faith and “they both have the same objective: the liberating practice of love.”

5.1.5 Public theologies

Narrative ideas and public theology interests share many common social engagements. The University of Otago, New Zealand defines public theology: “Public Theology isn’t about promoting the interests of ‘the Church’; it’s about drawing on the resources, insights and compassionate values of the Christian faith to contribute to the welfare of society.” They define the main areas of public theology as:

- Faith and Justice (prison reform);
- Faith and the Environment (the integrity of Creation);
- Faith and Good Governance (the public good, equality, fairness and social justice);
- Faith and Society (human dignity, the wellbeing of children).

Many of these areas overlap with narrative philosophy and practices that explore and operate within the same scope yet without the faith focus. Benjamin Valentin suggests that theology, in general as well as particular, “that aspires to be of service in the wider public realm as public discourse, should not restrict itself to the restatement of church belief or to the internal concerns of the church.” Rather it must address four concerns: take into account “the broad national socio-political circumstances within which it takes place;” “it must nurture a sense of our common life and a concern for the quality of our lives together as a social whole;” it should “visualise the possibilities and conditions for an overarching emancipatory project that

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could account for the diverse processes that produce social injustices and could prompt fellow citizens to take public action on behalf of justice” and; it should capture the attention of a “wide and diverse audience” with a clear “moving and harmonizing message that would facilitate alliances of struggle across racial, cultural, gender, class, and religious lines.”

Valentin’s summary statement embraces a broad range of social justice principles that resonate with narrative therapy and the voice of respondents and interviewees.

A public theology, then, is a form of discourse that couples either the language, symbols, or background concepts of a religious tradition with an overarching, integrative, emancipatory socio-political perspective in such a way that it movingly captures the attention and moral conscience of a broad audience and promotes the cultivation of those modes of love, care, concern, and courage required both for individual fulfilment and for broad-based social activism.67

Miller-McLemore explores the relationship between pastoral and public theology by stating that Paul Tillich laid foundations for pastoral theology as public theology with his three conceptual moves: the correlation method, devotion to a theology of culture and his view of practical theology.68 Tillich, according to Miller-McLemore, described practical theology “as a ‘bridge’ between systematic and historical theology and the world” and is concerned with how practical theology, and any new questions it may bring to public life, realises itself within church and society.69 Miller-McLemore states that the primary public of practical theology is society and its voice “emanates from its ability to transform daily practices in response to ‘cultural, political, social, or pastoral need bearing genuine religious import’.”70 She identifies two primary factors that distinguish recent moves toward public theology, namely “concerns about the silence of mainstream Christianity on key social issues and awareness of the serious limitations of pastoral focus on the individual alone.”71 This second aspect is especially important for this research because I argue for a paradigm shift in Christian and pastoral care and counselling from individualised to communal practices, and suggest that narrative ideas can show the way.

66 Valentin, Mapping, 87.
67 Valentin, Mapping, 87. Italics by Valentin.
69 Miller-McLemore, Pastoral, 100.
70 Miller-McLemore, Pastoral, 101.
71 Miller-McLemore, Pastoral, 102-103.
William Storrar firmly locates public theology in the public sphere, where public communication and argumentation take place. Storrar describes this sphere “as a site of inclusive diversity” and a “welcome site of pluralism” with “many forms of communicative reason, where differences should be affirmed and attended to, not excluded.”  

This supports my understanding of integrated narrative practices in a Christian and pastoral care and counselling context as well as offering a sound illustration of the idea of educational space as described and “constructed” by the interviewees in this research. Storrar also argues “for the importance of story-telling and the need to affirm other forms of expression for those silenced and excluded from the public sphere in order that they can name their injustice publicly and seek public redress.”  

There are many examples of these core narrative principles in various individual and community narrative practices. Such an understanding of public space can further improve the position of 'the other,' a topic addressed elsewhere in this Discussion, where public theological discourse includes “the phronesis of empathy.”  

This is best described here as “the ability to identify with and understand someone different than oneself especially when listening to their stories and testimonies, foster[ing] the cultivating of compassion within the public sphere.”  

We should also remember that compassionate embrace of the stories of the other was emphasised by Mia, Jack and especially Ruby.  

Storrar argues for shifting the perspective on public theology from modernity and postmodernity to the waves of globalisation so evident in recent centuries with their “key concepts of the human dynamic of interconnectedness,” with “multiple identities and many voices mixing together and influencing one another.”  

He believes this has two consequences for understanding public theology: “Firstly, there is no such thing as a global public theology but only local, contextual public theologies. ... Secondly, these local public theologies may be generating a new kind of global public theology in the 21st century.”  

Storrar suggests that the writing of medieval Christian humanist Erasmus regarding the genocide of the Carib population may indicate the pre-modern roots of practical theology and that “this is where

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72 Storrar, Locating, 177. See especially the discussion of Iris Marion Young  
73 Storrar, Locating, 180.  
74 Reflects Rebecca Chopp’s expression. Storrar, Locating, 180.  
75 Storrar, Locating, 180.  
76 Storrar, Locating, 182-183.  
77 Storrar, Locating, 183.
we must start in locating the history of public theology as we recognise it in the 21st century.”\textsuperscript{78}
If this is true, one of the most easily integrative aspects of a narrative approach to people’s “local knowledge” is to be found in the ideas of local theologies.

5.1.6 Apophatic theology

In the view of this researcher apophatic theology addresses very much the same themes at the fringe of language as postmodern thought, and therefore it can not only be another point of integration but can even point beyond to the transcendental dimension.

Catherine Keller notes that the argument for constitutive relationality has a complex ancestry and that radical relationalism is originally a feminist theological idea based on the concept that “we are constituted in and through relations to one another” and “in our differences we are not merely externally related” but “we are members one of another.”\textsuperscript{79} These theological ideas, I believe, may also be conveniently explored in a social constructivist milieu and therefore alongside and within narrative practices. Perhaps the metaphor of the “club of life” used in Narrative therapy may illustrate this. Keller introduces an idea that, in her words, “persistently provokes and eludes” her – the idea of unknowing where

the ‘tangle of unknowing’ signals an internal relationship between relationality and unknowing. If our relations as they unfold and multiply entangle us in an expanse beyond our knowing, we come from the start entangled in our unknowing; we come ignorant of the extent of our specific entanglements.\textsuperscript{80}

Keller’s concept of “agnotology” is helpful here as we explore the relationship to narrative principles. It is a neologism based on the Greek word αϒνώςιϚ “not knowing.”

Rather than epistemology, as the study of how we know what we know, agnotology studies how we don’t know what we don’t know. It designates the study of culturally-induced ignorance or doubt, particularly the publication of inaccurate or misleading scientific data. A prime example is the tobacco industry’s conspiracy to manufacture doubt about the cancer risk of tobacco use. Under the banner of scientific certainty, the shadow of uncertainty is systematically exploited.\textsuperscript{81}

\textsuperscript{78} Storrar, Locating, 186.
\textsuperscript{80} Keller, Tangles, 109.
\textsuperscript{81} Keller, Tangles, 111.
This example echoes numerous recent debates about DSM-5’s psychopathology criteria and the role and influence pharmaceutical corporations have in the mental health field. Production of any such “knowledge” that chooses to ignore the knowable consequences of its own actions and ends as wilful ignorance Keller calls “ignorant knowing.” It seems that agnotology implies that the only answer to such ignorant knowing is more knowledge, facts, objectivity and science, and it all comes with a sense of urgency. Keller might then ask why “under such circumstances, won’t any mystical cloud of unknowing, of the Christian apophasis (unsaying), at best obscure the glaring clarity of the present emergency?”82 She cites an article on decolonising epistemology by philosopher Eduardo Mendiesta where he doesn’t distinguish, unlike Keller, between “knowing ignorance”83 and “ignorant knowing.” Keller asserts that if “agnotology defines itself against all teachings of unknowing, it will only exemplify, I fear, the ignorant knowledge it deconstructs. For it will lose track of its own margin of uncertainty.”84 Uncertainty, says Keller, “becomes the condition of a postmodern collectivity” that can either wait for new scientific proofs that will end uncertainties, or can “consider uncertainty as the inevitable ingredient of crises.”85 This second option was addressed more than once in the research interviews. Oliver stated that counsellors have “to learn how to sit with their own uncertainty” and Lilly talked about personal and educational space that encounters anxiety, fears, doubt and lack of clarity as “the space to sit with that chaos.” Jack affirmed that sitting with chaos can provide new relations if one is kept safe. Jessica suggested that “to be able to sit with questions” may help deconstruct the “very constructed models of learning” which distract the “whole of life education and learning.” These insights resonate with the claim that when relationality is at its complex and multi-layered reality it “escapes the net of language” and that “moments of unknowingness about oneself tend to emerge in the context of relations to others” so that “our very self is exposed as the crucial fold between unknowingness and relationality.”86 That space, or crucial fold, contains, in my view, the landscapes we need for creative and fruitful narrative inquiries.

82 Keller, Tangles, 112.
83 Keller, Tangles, 113.
84 Keller, Tangles, 113. Keller refers here to Nicholas of Cusa’s Docta Ignorantia.
85 Keller, Tangles, 114. See the discussion of the work of science theorist Bruno Latour.
86 As in Keller, Tangles, 115. Italics by Keller.
Keller indicates that the practice of apophatic (sometimes called negative) theology “does not silence the affirmative proliferation of language” and although what we learn is real knowledge it is never complete and final, so therefore “all knowledge casts an apophatic shadow.” However in contrast to “ignorant knowledge,” claiming to know enough, “knowing ignorance” commits us to learn more. In relation to the research topic, exploring “knowing ignorance” seems just the right thing to do when externalising, deconstructing and re-authoring the dominant knowledges of, for example, so called depression or other psychopathologised labels. It also becomes possible that wording a multi-storied experience with a not-knowing stance within a relationship of equals can sit very comfortably in the chair we call ‘theological’.

The concept of learned ignorance comes from Nicholas of Cusa and perhaps even earlier from Socrates who allegedly claimed “I know that I know nothing.” The former writes that

> ... since the desire in us for knowledge is not in vain, surely, then it is our desire to know that we do not know. If we can attain this completely, we will attain learned ignorance. For nothing more perfect comes to a person, even the most zealous in learning, than to be found most learned in the ignorance that is uniquely one’s own.

It seems to me that the concept of a learned ignorance translates itself perfectly into our postmodern language as complementary to the “not knowing” stance of a narrative practitioner, both as construct and practice. How to approach not-knowing or human experiences that are not-expressible-in-language is probably the main interest of apophatic theology. In the context of this discussion, these aspects clearly go beyond mainstream narrative practices. However, it is my own experience that in the Christian and pastoral context they may invite conversations about people’s experiences with God and, additionally, open space for reviewing people’s local and little theologies in ways that further resonate with many of Sedmak’s theses as noted above. Apophatic theology uses language appropriate to its context, sometimes described as mystical language. Michael Sells explores the modern disease with mystical language. The aporia or the unresolvable dilemma of transcendence is that transcendence should be beyond names, therefore ineffable, however to state that it is

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87 Contemporary scholars cannot confirm that this derives from Socrates or even Plato.
88 Nicholas of Cusa, *Selected Spiritual Writings* (New York: Paulist Press, 1997), 89.
beyond names gives it a name – the transcendence. Sells outlines three responses to this dilemma. Silence is the initial response, followed by distinguishing “between ways in which the transcendent is beyond names and ways in which it is not,” and thirdly “refusal to solve the dilemma posed by the attempt to refer to the transcendent through a distinction between two kinds of name.”

This then leads to a new mode of discourse called “negative theology.” Negative is used because “it denies that the transcendent can be named or given attributes” and it leads, as Sells describes it, to “a linguistic regress” where each statement, either “positive” or “negative” is ad infinitum in need of correction. This in turn leads to an urge to form new language which ends in a language acceleration effect that is considered later in the Discussion. Sells describes this sequence.

The authentic subject of discourse slips continually back beyond each effort to name it or even to deny its nameability. The regress is harnessed and becomes the guiding semantic force, the dynamis, of a new kind of language. Apophasis is the common Greek designation for this language. Apophasis can mean ‘negation,’ but its etymology suggests a meaning that more precisely characterizes the discourse in question: apophasis (un-saying or speaking away).

There is a point where a “meaning event” indicates the moment when “the meaning has become identical or fused with the act of predication.” There is a “semantic location” that can be explored within fusions of “identities of meaning and event, reference and predication, essence and existence” because “the meaning event is a semantic occurrence.” Sells refers to modern God-language where the richness and differences of the medieval languages have been reduced to a single name in our time. The domination of the generic name, continues Sells, implies domination of “what” and affirms the “language of whatness or quiddity” where whatness asks questions of mystic experience as conditioned or unconditioned while the apophatic language of disontology continually moves towards the never achieved, yet ever progressing, removal of “what.”

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90 Sells, Mystical, 2.
91 Sells, Mystical, 2. Apophasic language may become “a language of disontology.” Sells, Mystical, 7.
92 Sells, Mystical, 9.
93 Sells, Mystical, 11.
space for narrative Christian and pastoral practices as understood in this research. It is a discourse in which “any single proposition is acknowledged as falsifying, as reifying. It is a discourse of double propositions, in which meaning is generated through the tension between the saying and unsaying. ... At its most intense, apophatic language has as a subject neither divine nor human, neither self nor other” and thus offers a critique of religious traditions based on the realisation of their deeper wisdom. This concept illustrates the thoughts of this researcher about a postmodern understanding of language, deconstruction, meaning, self and the other, and the influence this has on Christian and pastoral narrative practices.

Regarding negative theology, Derrida argues that “apophatic boldness always consists in going further than is reasonably permitted. That is ... passing to the limit, then crossing the frontier, including that of a community, thus of a socio-political, institutional, ecclesial reason or raison d’être.” In my view, apophatic theology offers space to explore elements of kenosis and how that “empty” space becomes filled with cultural or spiritual knowledges about who we are and who God is. In an apophatic spirit we can apply the language of un-saying on psychopathology-based stories about the person and un-say depression, for example, and explore other ways to describe this experience. It is very much in the spirit of narrative practices and may well serve as another place for integration. Charles Villa-Vicencio writes that a “new genre of theology is waiting to be born. It will need to look to the spoken and unspoken word, often so deep within the human psyche that it cannot be adequately articulated.”

5.1.7 Common ground

It is hoped that this review of relevant literature has helped to establish one conclusion. Narrative ideas and practices, especially the use of stories, are enriching for Christian theologies and pastoral practices. Whether the focus is on the person, society, language, stories, dominant and traditional knowledges, public and social themes, or engagements with the voiceless, disempowered, or with socially created injustices in people’s lives – Christian theologies and narrative ideas and practices share common ground. I see all these places as

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94 Sells, Mystical, 12-13.
96 From Rowland, The Cambridge, 250
more of an invitation than a road map, as points of integration between narrative practices and Christian and pastoral care and counselling. However if there is to be genuine integration between Christian theology and narrative ideas and practices the dimensionality of human experience must therefore invite what might be called dimensional theologies.

5.1.8 Dimensional theologies

Dimensional theologies respond to Villa-Vicencio’s previously cited call for a “new genre of theology” but also to the necessity for “local” and “little” theologies, in Sedmak’s sense. Dimensional theologies express these concepts as well as attempting to evidence the personal theological process of this researcher. The research, and the researcher’s own reflective practice have developed concepts of dimensional theologies that focus on pastoral care and counselling.

(1) Human experience is multi-dimensional and also its interpretations. They are intertwined and inseparable as inside and outside aspects of a person’s experience, two aspects with an infinite combination of dimensions unique to each person. There are also group and community dimensions in their cognitive, emotional, physical, spiritual, contextual, cultural, gender, racial, ethnic and historical manifestations.

(2) Language always has two or more dimensions. Even when there is one, the second or the other is absent but implicit. For example, mystical union with God can never be explained with words but it can be experienced as life, as well as through many other human experiences. For instance, how can an abused person describe their experience in words to someone lacking that experience? As noted earlier, Murray and Kluckhohn captured another view of dimensionality in their understanding of personality where every person is in certain respects like all others, like some others, like no others. There is therefore a multi-dimensionality in experience as well as in descriptions and interpretations. Within language and narrative this is recognized as multi-storiedness.

(3) The truth is absolute only in its own dimension so truth in one dimension may never be the truth in another dimension. This applies to persons as well as constructs.

(4) Human experience extends from word and language to sound, smell, vision, touch, and movement, and amongst other modes, uses tones, images, signs and rituals for its

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expression. And also – silence. They are all dimensional landscapes of human experience and can all be considered in narrative conversations or theological explorations.

(5) Concerning “I” and “You,” God’s vision for our relationships as humans from within a narrative frame could be: If you are supposed to know who I am you would be me. But you are you. And I am I. Only I know who I am. And only you know who you are. God alone knows us both. My life to me and yours to you are given as such with a reason and the meaning of that is up to you and me to find, in companionship. Why then, if we have conversations or encourage each other’s journey, would I ever assume that I can know better than you the deepest personal realities? How could I ever be an expert on you being yourself?

(6) Pastoral dimensions can then focus on a person’s life rather than concepts thereof, even theological concepts. Thus, caring and counselling professions, expert and professional or pastoral and spiritual, help with life itself rather than with methods, techniques and theories. They are helpful only if they generate life. As shown already, ‘life’ is also one of the most used metaphors in narrative practices. Within this frame the words of Jesus - “I have come that they may have life, and that abundantly” (John 10:10) - echo the motivation of narrative. It is also true that he himself lived and said without explaining – “Come and see” (John 1:39). There is a meaning – come and live yourself.

There are as many dimensional theologies as there are people and this is my dimensional theology, foundational for practice. By using dimensional theology we may consider dimensional pastoral conversations or dimensional pastoral 'therapy.'

5.2 General and specific aspects of integration

The aim of this sub-chapter is to review and evaluate some of the key topics emerging from the research that highlight integrational aspects of narrative practices. It also aims to address integrative aspects specific to the context of Christian and pastoral care and counselling and adds to the elements already noted by research participants.

5.2.1 Language

98 “Club of life” in re-membering conversations, River of Life, community narrative practices: Tree of Life, Kite of Life, Team of Life, Bicycle of Life, Rhythm of Life.
Language gives narrative life. Eugene Peterson identifies the languages of intimacy and relationship, information, and motivation\(^99\) concluding that in the life of faith competency in all of these languages is necessary. As a pastor Peterson found that the first language of relationship should be the most practiced and for which he has “a primary responsibility for teaching proficiency in others.”\(^100\) He writes that it is “not language about God or the faith; it is not language in the service of God and the faith; it is language to and with God in faith.”\(^101\)

It is a converting language that converts the language of prayer from the culture-conditioning world around us. We have to try “to get as much as possible into the speech of love and response and intimacy”\(^102\) when we speak with God and other human beings, even if only in prayer, and to speak the first language we learned. McFague notes that we
do not so much use language as we are used by it. Since we are all born into a world which is already linguistic, in which the naming has already taken place, we only own our world to the extent that the naming that has occurred is our naming.\(^103\)

This research has persuaded me that we all live today in a world marked with a language acceleration effect. Language multiplies every second in hugely diverse and multi-dimensional ways, from political, social, communal and cultural to the specifically scientific languages of technology, medicine and the social sciences and on to mass media communication platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. We may have many words that have similar meanings or we may even describe the same phenomenon with a different term, yet perhaps with a unique explanatory twist. When psychotherapy and counselling develop or integrate various theories about the human person they do so through language. If language constructs represent social groups and cultures, how long will “Christian” survive?

If we look to the history of pastoral care it didn’t. ‘Soul’ was an important word and now we have ‘self’ and even ‘identity.’ What has this change of word brought to human experience? Is it now some “new” knowledge about humans or just another wording for the same experiences? These issues are important for Christians and for pastoral carers and counsellors

\(^100\) Peterson, *The Contemplative*, 94.
\(^102\) Peterson, *The Contemplative*, 94.
because they point to the vast Christian experience in the helping professions that may be lost in contemporary translation if it’s not re-worded. Secondly they invite practitioners to re-consider whether they want to be involved in co-constructing the dominant knowledge for our times to ensure that such knowledge is not only in accordance with Christian theologies but also of use and helpful for persons’ lives. This is especially true for the field of so-called mental health.

A language acceleration effect is certainly no less present in theology. The questions are many: Do we all still know what we are talking about - even if educated? Besides various knowledges, what about other languages besides English? What about people who use English yet it is not their first language, as in my case? How many misunderstandings will emerge if we take our use of language for granted expecting that another person means the same thing? Narrative practices therefore emphasise “experience near” descriptions of people’s experiences; using their own choice of words and terms for it may be the best way to understand each other most accurately. Professional and “expert” languages may easily confuse people or at least disempower them with their totalising or colonising knowledges.

Interviewee Jessica said something very similar:

I don’t mind if people language the stuff and you go: ‘This is how Jessica understands it.’ Some people call it gestalt, some call it CBT. I find it useful. I take that out and use this but I wouldn’t call myself a purist. Because there is nothing new under the Sun. How come Christians can’t learn that? There is nothing new under the Sun! Putting a new label in practical theology does not make it new! If it helps you describe it, richly, thickening, I’d say: ‘Go for it!’ But it is very confusing to many people.

There is nothing new to the notion that we just develop new language rather than discover something new. For example, Miller, Duncan and Hubble advocated in the late 1990s the use of a “unifying language” in psychotherapy practice arguing that rather than a significant difference in psychotherapy theory and method there is a difference in language.

One way to distinguish a treatment model from others without validating data is to develop a special language or way of talking about the theory and techniques that is exclusive to that model ... Possessing a special language imbues the treatment model with an aura of difference that, in turn, justifies the claims of
uniqueness made by its developer ... In essence, the models are made to seem different because they sound different.\textsuperscript{104}

This claim may be tested against the example of “trademarking” Christian counselling approaches, a sign of the times of our marketing age. Consider Bernard Tyrrell’s ‘Christotherapy,’ G.C. Disalver’s ‘Imago Dei Psychotherapy,’\textsuperscript{105} Jay Adams’ ‘Nouthetic Counseling,’ Charles Solomon’s ‘Spirituotherapy,’ Howard Clinebell’s ‘Growth Counseling,’ Bachus and Chapian’s ‘Misbelief Therapy,’ Neil Anderson’s ‘Discipleship Counseling,’ Troy Reiner’s ‘Faith Therapy,’ Dan Montgomery’s ‘Compass Therapy,’ or Peter Bellini’s ‘Truth Therapy.’\textsuperscript{106} Miller et al find strong support for their claim in the body of research, as represented in Michael Lambert who recognises how all good performed therapies have much in common and all effective therapists, whether cognitive, behavioural or psychodynamic “act an awful lot alike.”\textsuperscript{107} Miller et al’s resting on almost forty years of research claim that “we can say with confidence that the various manifestations of therapy are more alike than different.

Therapies work not because of their unique explanatory schemes or specialized language; on the contrary... their success is largely based on what they have in common.”\textsuperscript{108} Helpful aspects of any good therapy are not found in models or techniques but in the same therapeutic variables of all approaches that, according to Lambert, are to be found in respect, understanding and care.\textsuperscript{109} Actually, Miller et al present “in order of their relative contribution to change in therapy” Lambert’s “four common curative elements” that all forms of therapies have as their focus. They are also the elements of unifying therapeutic language, detailed here with the percentage of their influence towards a successful therapy outcome noted in brackets: extra-therapeutic factors that focus on the client’s environment (40%); therapy relationship factors between client and therapist (30%); model and technique factors as “the doings of therapy” (15%) and; expectancy, hope, and placebo factors (15%).\textsuperscript{110}

\textsuperscript{104} Scott D. Miller et al., \textit{Escape from Babel: Toward a Unifying Language for Psychotherapy Practice} (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997), 11. Italics by Miller et al.
\textsuperscript{105} With protected name indeed!
\textsuperscript{106} Listed in the Bibliography.
\textsuperscript{107} Miller et al, \textit{Escape}, 23.
\textsuperscript{108} Miller et al, \textit{Escape}, 22-23. Italics by Miller et al.
\textsuperscript{109} Miller et al, \textit{Escape}, 23.
\textsuperscript{110} Miller et al, \textit{Escape}, 24.
To increase mindfulness about extra-therapeutical factors Miller et al recommend another non-prescriptive list: Work towards becoming change-focused in therapy rather than stability-focused, and discern pre-treatment, between-sessions, and potential-future change.\textsuperscript{111} (This sounds full of hope and future-oriented, where between-session letter writing is useful and looks for unique outcomes and re-authoring as in narrative practices). Seek to be mindful of client contribution to change, honour client competence and work within the client worldview. (This echoes the idea of them being an ‘expert’ and respects ‘local knowledges’ as in narrative practices). Finally there is “tapping the client’s world outside of therapy.” (This sounds very much like ‘club of life’ in narrative practices).\textsuperscript{112}

Miller et al apply these principles to theology and culture, citing an African proverb: “Until lions have their historians, tales of hunting will always glorify the hunter.”\textsuperscript{113} Perhaps reflecting the wider cultural belief in ‘original sin,’ psychotherapy theory and practice continue to stereotype clients as the vessels of pathology, the manufacturers of resistance, and the message bearers of family dysfunction. Rarely are clients given the credit for change occurring in psychotherapy that the research so clearly demonstrates is warranted.\textsuperscript{114}

Miller et al advocate in favour of developing healing rituals and gathered, corporate guidance on how to facilitate hope and a positive expectation of change in clients: “The therapist should believe in the procedure or therapeutic orientation.”\textsuperscript{115} “The therapist should show interest in the results of the procedure or orientation.”\textsuperscript{116} “The procedure or orientation must be credible and persuasive from the client’s frame of reference.”\textsuperscript{117} “The procedure or technique should be based on, connected with, or elicit a previously successful experience of the client” with a “possibility focus” present.\textsuperscript{118} “Treatment should be oriented toward the future.”\textsuperscript{119} “Treatment should enhance or highlight the client’s feeling of personal control.”\textsuperscript{120}

\textsuperscript{111} Miller et al, Escape, 40-59.
\textsuperscript{112} Miller et al, Escape, 60-80.
\textsuperscript{113} Miller et al, Escape, 34.
\textsuperscript{114} Miller et al, Escape, 61.
\textsuperscript{115} Miller et al, Escape, 131-132.
\textsuperscript{116} Miller et al, Escape, 132-135.
\textsuperscript{117} Miller et al, Escape, 135-139.
\textsuperscript{118} Miller et al, Escape, 139-143.
\textsuperscript{119} Miller et al, Escape, 143-149.
\textsuperscript{120} Miller et al, Escape, 149-154.
“Treatment should ‘de-person-alise’ the client’s problems, difficulties, or shortcomings.”

Although not intended to describe narrative practices and concepts, these wisdom statements may well serve that purpose.

For all these reasons it is my belief that Christian and pastoral carers/counsellors can do better than to continue investing in such a ‘therapy’ culture. I believe that in narrative practices we now have the capacity to respond to this dilemma by opening new possibilities of working, not only with developed therapeutic interventions but also with faith stories. Narrative practices, together with other approaches informed by social construction and poststructuralism, are well positioned to explore and challenge contemporary ideas about psychotherapeutic practice and be a significant contributor to re-defining concepts of professionality in the field.

For those working within a Christian setting the Babel story has even more significance when paralleled with the story of Pentecost. Stanley Hauerwas not only formally appeals to narrative principles but in his later work also emphasises Christian narrative as a part of the church’s lived experience. His Pentecost sermon highlights a parallel theme in the story of Babel and the story of Pentecost. “For we believe that at Pentecost God has undone what was done at Babel.”

In Genesis 11:1-9 all people had one language, yet few words, whereas in Acts 2:1-21 all the native languages are united through the presence of the Holy Spirit. Every person can understand what has been said in their own tongue thus providing once again a common and unique language. For Hauerwas the confusion of languages revealed God’s gift to people who recognised themselves as creatures. However they turned the gift of unity into the building of tribes and tribal languages, the establishment of ‘the other,’ and created histories of wars where “the fear of the other became the overriding passion that motivated each group to force others into their story or face annihilation.”

Therefore in order to understand “the extraordinary event of Pentecost” we need to view it “against the background of Babel.”\textsuperscript{124} Restored human unity is not to be found in attempts to create a single language that will forget or deny particular histories and differences but in the Spirit that unites. That Spirit creates church as “God’s new language” that has to be not only spoken but rather lived.

At Pentecost God created a new language, but it was a language that is more than words. It is instead a community whose memory of its saviour creates the miracle of being a people whose very differences contribute to their unity. We call this new creation \textit{church}. It is constituted by word and sacrament, as the story we tell, the story we embody, must not only be told but enacted.\textsuperscript{125}

Hauerwas reminds the Church not to fall into the trap of trying to rebuild God’s unity through “coercion rather than witness,” and in so doing miss out on becoming a Pentecost people “so formed by the Spirit that our humility is but a reflection of our confidence in God’s sure work.”\textsuperscript{126} He explains that his sermon on Babel and Pentecost expresses “the hopes of reminding us that the emphasis on narrative is unintelligible abstracted from an ecclesial context” because “the emphasis on narrative can only result in scholarly narcissism if narrative texts are abstracted from the concrete people who acknowledge the authority of the Bible.”\textsuperscript{127} Here, somehow, I find again the emphasis on aspects of \textit{life} and \textit{living} as addressed at several points in this Discussion. The \textit{life} aspect, even as a metaphor, stands in every context against ossified traditions based on conservation of power rather than on staying alert to ever-changing life conditions and listening to people’s local needs, foreshadowing the concept of “thin spirituality” that will be addressed later.

Interviewee Jack in his seeking a space to “challenge back” echoes Hauerwas’ claims that the church, both as a storyteller and as a character of the story, is an “ontological necessity” and “crucial for sustaining claims of the narratability of the world” that is called through “God storied people” to be a constant challenge “to the conventional wisdom of the world.”\textsuperscript{128}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[124] Hauerwas, \textit{The Hauerwas Reader}, 146.
\item[125] Hauerwas, \textit{The Hauerwas Reader}, 149. Italics by Hauerwas.
\item[126] Hauerwas, \textit{The Hauerwas Reader}, 149.
\item[127] Hauerwas, \textit{The Hauerwas Reader}, 152.
\item[128] Hauerwas, \textit{The Hauerwas Reader}, 161.
\end{footnotes}
Language is an inevitable and precious element of our humanity but perhaps it’s time to consider language, for the purposes of counselling and psychotherapy, as less “true” to human life and experience and less defining of who we really are. Perhaps we can embrace stories with permission to leave them as unfinished, changeable, chaotic and multiple stories, and even silent in some cases, but still with every possibility for humans to express themselves, even in professional settings. Perhaps professionals could slow down the language acceleration effect or neutralise it by focusing more on other aspects of people’s experience as described by them, or even by exploring experiences beyond language. Otherwise professionals could become a part of the “problem” they are trying to solve, as Greenberg and Frances argued in the Literature Review.

Human experience is the language of the present moment yet it needs words to be communicated to other persons as expressed in the popular saying – “who names it owns it” or “who names the world owns the world.” David Epston suggests that every time "we ask a question, we're generating a possible version of a life."129 This resonates with a personal story. During my research period I had the opportunity to teach narrative practices in the Christian pastoral context.130 My first question to the students would be: What are we doing when for example we encounter someone in pastoral conversation? Some of the answers might have been: counselling, talking, listening, caring, teaching, guiding, encouraging, supporting, treating, healing, helping etc. The plethora of words, names, terms and language, was my point as it already defines the scope of our agency. Our choice of words will reflect our constructs about people, the world, God or whatever and that choice has been made even before we start a conversation. My second question to the students would be: “What do we treat?” Again the answers are varied: problem, context, circumstances, disorder, illness, spiritual crisis, life, etc. Thirdly: “Who do we treat?” The replies generally include: person, patient, client, man, woman, individual, soul, human being, self (which one?), identity or identities, Christian, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, African, Asian, European and so on.

Again the answer serves to co-construct our ‘counselling’ position or stance and also the positions of conversational partners. Charles Gerkin asserts that “language constructs world.

130 At Stirling Theological College.
To have a world, to live in a world, means, for humans, to inhabit a time and place in which a certain language is connected with experience to give meaning to that experience. More than anything else, the capacity to make meaning marks the human as human.”

It is crucial therefore to have this in mind when developing training and educational programs for future Christian and pastoral carers/counsellors and to invest in co-creating contexts of hope, strength and values. When this is applied to the theological dimension of education, Meister Eckhart contributes the concept that “God is a word, a word unspoken,” implying that God cannot be fully known by human words and concepts as we have already noted in the discussion on apophatic theology. In the light of the dimensional theologies suggested earlier, God actually spoke through life, that is, through the embodiment of Jesus, rather than with words alone, Holy Scripture. Jesus could therefore also be viewed as the spoken Word of God while each one of us is a pronounced or spoken word of God in our experience of life. If considered in this way, there are multiple theological implications or applications in pastoral encounters. These aspects may well be explored in the context of Christian and pastoral narrative conversations, both within languages of saying or un-saying, and if invited by the conversation partners.

5.2.2 Conversations about identities
As already argued, Christian pastoral care and counselling conversations focus primarily on identities rather than on the self. This understanding will now be developed more fully.

5.2.2.1 Self and identity: Community rather than individual “treatment”
Knowledges about the self, especially in psychology, but also in sociology, anthropology and even in theology have attained undreamt dimensions, and yet they vary so much across cultures. When I attended a course on pastoral practice at a Catholic Seminary in Melbourne the main emphasis was on learning about various selves. For example, we explored:

- Self/Selves; Ideal Self - Actual Self; The Johari Window: Public Self (we all know) – Private Self (only I know) – Hidden Self (you know) – Undeveloped Self (unknown); Cohesive Self –

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Fragmenting Self; Intentional or Purposeful Self; Observing Self – Experiencing Self; Developing (or Adaptive) Self (“The shadow of the self behind the hidden self”); Unconscious Self; Emotional Self; Defended Self; Moral Self and Transcending Self; the 3 levels of the Psychic Self - Psycho-physiological Self, Psycho-social Self and Spiritual/Moral Self.

Inevitably, a number of questions emerge. If we ‘treat’ the self which one do we treat? How many selves does an average counsellor or psychotherapist need to know for his or her practice? With how many selves do ‘clients’ need to identify themselves in order to be able to continue with sessions of the particular therapeutic approach? Finally, what do we “treat” when treating selves – the persons, the culture, the context, the language?

Narrative therapy explores landscapes of identity and action. I support the idea that Christian and pastoral counsellors should focus their conversations on narratives of identity rather than on narratives of self, understood as a person’s identification with different cultural, social, and religious aspects. There is always some element of externalisation where a person identifies with something rather than actually ‘being it’. A person can therefore identify his or her experience with descriptions of depression but is not depressed in the sense of an internalised knowledge of the personalised self. Identities also contain a certain freedom of choice. They are at liberty to deal with whatever the problem is from a distance. In narrative pastoral conversations Christians can enjoy a similar freedom and liberty in exploring faith experiences or theological themes because Christian identities may differ. Although developing, the Christian self may appear more static and in search of ‘final’ theological answers. This is how interview respondents described client expectations. In other words, the self tends to internalise cultural knowledges where identities reflect more of an externalising process. An example of this may perhaps be found in the difference between how western and other cultures experience and explain the self.

McLeod describes how people from different cultures have very distinct modes of storytelling. Individualistic cultures “tend to tell well ordered, logical, linear stories” and people from orally based cultures “tend to tell stories that are circular and never seem to get to the point.”

133 McLeod, Introduction, 295.
These different linguistic aspects, and the use of language in general, communicate a great deal about cultural and personal identity. McLeod notes Landrine’s contrast of western “referential” experience of self (autonomous, separate individual with “inner privacy” and strong boundaries) with non-Western or “sociocentric” cultures and their “indexical” experience of self: “the self in these cultures is not an entity existing independently from the relationships and context in which it is interpreted.”

Seeking some sort of bridging methodology, he quotes Sato who recommends an interchangeable use of therapy techniques between individualistic/agentic and collectivist/communitarian cultures. This approach could benefit both. However, in a reflection of the tension revealed in the data, Macleod concludes that despite these attempts “the tension between an individual self with ‘depth’ and a relational self that is ‘extended’ presents a real challenge for counsellors and psychotherapists.”

Given that training, professional preference and lifetime acculturation create in many therapists a strong sense of the individual, they often seek and initiate changes on an individual level. Narrative therapy may be one of the options that is transforming this phenomenon. Macleod catches this shift, noting that this tension may be easing, as the fundamentally individualist mainstream therapies, that emerged in the twentieth century, such as psychodynamic, person-centred and CBT, are being supplemented by more collectivist therapies such as narrative therapy, feminist therapy and constructionist approaches.

This provides a foothold for my second suggestion for Christian and pastoral carers/counsellors that they could profitably place their emphasis on communal rather than individual practices, treatment interventions or counselling. I support developing and exploring conversations with people that take place in their context and community. This could be outsider witness practice, conducting conversations with a group of counsellors or carers instead of individuals, or practicing narrative and collaborative ideas within a communal context. If we place the focus of our conversations on identities rather than on selves, and if we agree that identities are necessarily socially constructed and maintained would it not be the most natural way to have conversations and work with people? For example, after individualised therapy a person then has to go back to their social group(s) to test the insights

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gained. If successful, identities will be chosen, approved and sustained. Wouldn’t it then make sense to create such an environment for people even in the period we describe as treatment?¹³⁷ Wouldn’t this also be an ideal context and fitting practice for Christian communities as in the best pastoral tradition of community care? This also connects clearly with the space that interviewees spoke about in this research. With, as Ethan suggested, some adjustment to postmodern language and exploration of communal narrative practice, Jack’s example of formal and informal groups in his church community may indicate a future pathway for Christian and pastoral carers and counsellors. The communal context opens up endless possibilities for Christian communities seeking to be open in their invitation to encounter otherness in others and in themselves.

5.2.2.2 Identity in narrative therapy

A narrative approach proposes that our life and identity are shaped by relations and are socially constructed. The stories about us that form our identity would not exist outside of our various relationships with others and how we think they perceive us.¹³⁸ White finds the issue of identity to be central for persons seeking help from therapists. He notes that “many people who seek therapy believe that the problems of their lives are a reflection of their own identity, or the identity of others, or a reflection of the identity of their relationships.”¹³⁹

This view also guides the attempts to resolve problems but with the effect of deepening them. It leads people to believe even more strongly that the problem they face reflects essential truths about the nature and character of themselves, others and their relationships. People begin to internalise their problems, believing that they and others are the problem. That is precisely the rationale behind the practice of externalising conversations where the problems are seen as separate from the person.

¹³⁷ I witnessed the efficacy of one such approach at Level Two, Narrative therapy training in Adelaide through watching outsider witness narrative practices where people involved commented that a few such encounters equalled, for them, several years of individual therapy.
¹³⁸ Cramer, Narrative, 11.
¹³⁹ White, Maps, 9.
5.3 The other

The various aspects of ‘the other’ are so potent that they may easily form another PhD project. However I have selected those that highlight and connect to essential themes in this Discussion.

5.3.1 Theological aspects of ‘otherness’

Fabrice Blée focuses on aspects of ‘the other’ as a contemporary metaphor for an engaged Christian today. In his text on monastic interfaith dialogue, The Third Desert, (originally titled The Desert of Otherness)\(^{140}\) Blée claims that today

> the desert is not a geographical place or a structure. The monk engaged in dialogue withdraws into the heart of religious otherness. After the desert of sand and the desert of stones, we come to the third desert. Today more than ever, relationship with other believers becomes this deserted place that is filled with trials, temptations, and union with the divine.\(^{141}\)

If genuine, dialogue with the other “seeks to understand others as they themselves want to be understood”\(^{142}\) and not to satisfy our projections or “winning needs.” Blée notes interestingly that despite different literary resources, monks whether Christian, Buddhist or Hindu for example, “need no time at all to sense how close they are to one another” because they share the same goal in searching for the Ultimate as “that which is greater than what can be understood, felt or imagined.”\(^{143}\)

For Christians, openness to interfaith dialogue can provide an opportunity to contact again “the neglected dimensions of their personality”\(^{144}\) because as Carl Jung claimed, East “is in us” and represents “all the aspects of our personality which have become atrophied in our Western civilization.”\(^{145}\) Monks therefore become examples for us all in becoming “fellow seekers” and “fellow pilgrims” with the other.\(^{146}\) This however invites us to “reexamine theology” in the spiritual, sacramental and methodological dimension,\(^{147}\) a very similar call to

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\(^{140}\) Le desert de l’altérité.
\(^{142}\) Blée, The Third, 20.
\(^{143}\) Blée, The Third, 57.
\(^{144}\) Blée, The Third, 67.
\(^{145}\) Blée, The Third, 68.
\(^{146}\) Blée, The Third, 74-75.
\(^{147}\) Blée, The Third, 79.
the one discussed earlier under the theme of integration between various Christian theologies and narrative ideas. Therefore, it is not only postmodernity that is “challenging” Christianity, it is rather the position of “the other” in any of its relations (revelations?), from religious or cultural to psychotherapeutic, and this embodies the question as to how we can become true equals with mutual respect and dignity. The important issue here, especially for Christian theologies, is centred on “favouring language” as a sort of “theological methodology” yet this is not authentic for Eastern experience with their own favouring languages.  

A crucial theme for encountering ‘the other’ emerges in “the meaning of hospitality” because a “fresh expression of hospitality” is seen as “the primordial gesture of Christian conduct” where our only possibility for receiving “strangers is by receiving them with their most cherished spiritual longings.”

Additional aspects of hosting will be considered in the subchapter on re-presenting but the theme requires illustration. I was invited to re-consider hospitality as a theme in my conversations with a student Chaplain who shared her experiences from a Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) placement with asylum seekers in Melbourne. She asked herself when coming into their space: “Who is actually hosting who?” Is she as an Australian citizen, and as a representative provider of pastoral care, the one who is hosting them? Or are they hosting her in their temporary home and inviting her to enter their space. It is the remnant, preserved and precious space of their culture, their customs, their language, their hopes and dreams for the future and is it finally the intimate space where they, as host, invite her to encounter their world? All of us in our different ministries and services may then ask ourselves the same question: Do I allow the other to host me in their world? Or do I need them to first become part of my world so I can feel comfortable to work with them or help them? How do I host them if I’m coming from a dominant cultural, professional (medical, psychotherapeutic, ministerial…) setting?

The same thoughts emerged from a Narrative therapy perspective in Jodi Aman’s exploration of the metaphor of “therapist as host,” thus shaping therapeutic practice in relationship to

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148 Blée, The Third, 80.
149 Blée, The Third, 80, 81.
the physical aesthetics of consulting room, marketing, documentation and the use of websites. Aman claims that to treat “someone as a cherished guest addresses the indisputable power differential in a therapeutic relationship by elevating the status of the person who comes to consult the therapist. This has been so tangible in my work that people have noticed.” Genuine dialogue invites us “to go beyond” our “respective cultural limitations” and any dialogue “is meaningless if it is not founded on a dialogue ad intra.” The otherness of “the other” may be re-considered also within “the otherness of God” and monks of different faiths inherently had a capacity to recognise “that their encounter is rooted in the silence of divine union that is beyond all words.” This resonates strongly with our earlier discussion of the apophatic language of un-saying that finds expression also in Blée’s belief that “monks throughout the world speak the same language”, yet another Pentecost story where, despite different languages people from different nations understood each other in the Spirit. The Tower of Babel story could well exemplify psychotherapy theories in their diversity and potentially conflicting outcomes.

Blée explains that “assimilating the other means refusing to recognize that he or she is different” and that in such a case “all one is doing is looking for oneself in the other, or making the other into oneself.” This research discussion contends that dialogue follows hospitality and Blée’s insights help to unfold the dynamics of dialogue. As a seeming response to the concern of Pope Benedict XVI about the “dictatorship of relativism” Blée claims that an “[e]ncounter with the other as other is an opportunity, not a danger. The great challenge of our time is to make such encounters part of our spiritual practice.” This research strongly supports this principle and identifies spiritual encounter as the very essence of Christian and pastoral care and counselling narrative practice.

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152 Encountering God as the absolute other may be explored in narrative conversations.
153 Le Saux’s thoughts as in Blée, The Third, 126.
154 Blée, The Third, 133.
155 Blée, The Third, 134.
To achieve that encounter Blée calls for investigation of “the spirituality of the dialogue” as “a return to the desert, the desert of otherness” that leads from communication to communion.\textsuperscript{156} This dynamic seems very close to ideas of community narrative practices. The desert of otherness is not a geographical location but rather “a relational space in which we meet the other.” \textsuperscript{157} It has no physical boundaries because we can take it with us, and accordingly our pilgrimage is a journey to the sacred space within ourselves, a concept that will be explored in more detail in the sub-chapter focused on space.

In conclusion, Blée suggests that the major way for today’s Christian seeking God is in encounter with ‘the other’. Blée’s thoughts can easily be translated from a theological to a therapeutic care or counselling realm. Christian and pastoral practitioners may even enhance their practice if they consider using narrative practices within this frame. They may offer a way for psychopathologised, ill, disordered and otherwise-defined incompetent patients or clients to become a human person who safely languages his or her story about complex experiences that may well be our own at some other time or in other circumstances. To meet the other in pastoral encounter may sometimes feel like facing a desert, but so easily might we also become a desert for others in good, bad and indifferent ways.

5.4 Similarity of contexts: Pastoral care and narrative practices

I view the pastoral care context as very much tuned and ready for narrative practices. It can be seen in Emmanuel Lartey’s description of pastoral care where, as this research has indicated, common ground is especially shared with community narrative practices. This early formation text has served two decades of pastoral care practitioners here in Australia and is examined for this reason. Lartey highlights five essential elements that can form a clear bridge to narrative practices and affirms that pastoral care: is “an expression of human concern through activities” where one is present to people in need; recognizes the mysterious and transcendent dimension of life; is expressed through “multi-variate forms of communication” such as verbal, non-verbal and indirect and where the creative arts express meaning in symbol or artefact; founded and grounded in love; seeks to offer relief but also has empowering and

\textsuperscript{156} Blée, \textit{The Third}, 136-141.
\textsuperscript{157} Blée, \textit{The Third}, 178-179.
advocacy dimensions aimed “at prevention and fostering.”  

When these interactional dynamics are aligned with Lartey’s intercultural approach, his citing of Kluckhohn and Murray’s intriguingly ‘trinitarian’ formulation of personhood focuses on human beings as simultaneously universal, cultural and individual. “Every human person is in certain respects: 1. Like all others, 2. Like some others, 3. Like no other.”  Interculturality is therefore sensitive to the “complex interrelatedness and interconnectedness” of these three aspects of humanity and pastoral carers will seek “always to have the others in view and therefore to hold all three in creative and dynamic tension.”

Lartey acknowledges five major approaches that shape pastoral care practice: therapy, ministry, social action, empowerment and personal interaction. Interestingly, within such a division of mode of interaction, a Narrative therapy or approach will actually be less of a therapy aimed at healing the person than an empowering process that is searching for something good, worthy and valuable in the human person that builds on a person’s pre-existing strengths rather than managing their weaknesses. Narrative practices would therefore tend to embody and embrace the ‘care’ of the pastoral context rather than the ‘cure’ of the medical model.

Many Australian pastoral counsellors began as pastoral carers. Accordingly, early formational engagement with Lartey’s claim that “at least four principal areas” of pastoral counselling were under critique (psychological reductionism, socio-political apathy, theological weakness and individualism) opened up the ground for this current discussion on the more holistic, embracing and inclusive approaches of Narrative therapy. This research affirms a contemporary response that the use of narrative practices by Christian and pastoral carers/counsellors can more cautiously integrate the dominant knowledges of our time. They can then “translate” rich Christian traditional knowledges into our postmodern language,

158 Emmanuel Y. Lartey, In Living Colour: An Intercultural Approach to Pastoral Care and Counselling (London: Cassell, 1997), 5. See also 6-9.
159 Lartey, In Living Colour, 12. Consider also David Augsberger’s use of their concept. “These three dimensions allow us to examine our essential humanness, our cultural embeddedness and our individual uniqueness” human nature, culture and personality. In Pastoral Counselling Across Cultures (Minneapolis: Westminster, John Knox Press, 1991), 49.
161 Lartey, In Living Colour, 30-33.
162 Lartey, In Living Colour, 79-81.
become socially engaged (as noted by interviewee Lucas) with sound and ongoing theological reflections on new and local theologies,\textsuperscript{163} and form and explore practices that put more emphasis on communal rather than individual aspects. This is an invitation to a model of social therapy where self and community are engaged in critical analysis and Lartey again provided narrative-sensitive foundations for pastoral carers in this basic text: deeply engaged “recognition” of those involved; moving to “identify” – first “people” and then “issues”, 3) “befriending” with story-telling and story-listening; “working together in groups” on identified issues; and “symbolic collective action” such as marching, protesting, demonstrating or other appropriate responses. Reflective practice, at individual and group level, continues to affirm both dynamics and relationships.\textsuperscript{164}

These foundational principles currently find expression in the work of many Narrative practitioners. The themes that emerged from the data find support for the integration of Narrative practices in Christian counselling and pastoral care contexts but, more than that, they clearly seem to have a better fit than other therapeutic approaches in offering new ways to respond to people’s needs and to do so in ways that respect cultural, religious or any other particularities. Ultimately the concept of ‘otherness’ challenges us to bring respect, seek integrity, find joy in cultural diversity, engage experience through story and thus discern the presence of God.

The presence and activity of God is to be found in the midst of the experiences of the world. This is not to deny the horrors of life in the world today. Instead it is to inspire the quest for redemptive involvement in the world. It is a call to all who care for persons and planet to become more deeply involved in the life of the world. To recognise God’s presence in the various cultures and heritages of the world. It is to stand in awe of the mystery of ‘otherness’. It is to engage together in a quest for clearer sight, more incisive judgement and redemptive, transformative action for the integrity of all.\textsuperscript{165}

\textbf{5.4.1 Re-presenting}

Narrative therapy seems to be strong on “re-” words and this one comes from a Christian perspective, and when aspects of otherness are related to hospitality the question is raised:

\textsuperscript{163} Lartey elaborates especially on liberal theology.
\textsuperscript{164} Lartey, \textit{In Living Colour}, 103-107.
\textsuperscript{165} Lartey, \textit{In Living Colour}, 133-134.
Who is re-presenting who in a pastoral setting? Who is the host and who is the guest? Who is hosting who? When entering the world of a patient or a client is that world theirs or ours?

Christian and pastoral carers/counsellors joined questionnaire respondents and interviewees in expressing a belief that the person coming for conversation re-presents God to them. Christian counsellors, given their faith identity, also re-present God with their beliefs or personal theology strongly attached to culture, ethnicity, occupation, age group, gender, etc. Therefore, a mutual re-presentation is being re-presented. The eternal, Christian values, witness, community of faith, particular church or Church tradition, and finally spirituality are re-presented personally and communally to everyone involved in a conversation.

John Patton’s position is reflected in many caring professions: “Pastoral care involves not just what you know, but also what you are.” He notes both relational and faith dimensions:

The pastoral carer, whether laity or clergy, is present to the person cared for in a particular kind of relationship – one that ‘re-presents’ the presence of God through relationship to the person cared for. Pastoral carers ‘re-present’ or remind persons of God by remembering and hearing, and affirming by their action that God continues to hear and remember them.

God is ‘re-presented’ in a pastoral relationship when the carer is aware that he represents more than himself and more than his particular community of faith. The presence he offers is more than his presence. He is a reminder and re-presenter of God, faith, the church, and all that religion may represent to the person cared for.

Such re-presenting does not just apply to Christian practitioners. Any conversation partner re-presents his or her identities and constructed worldviews. However in a Christian context, or indeed any other faith context, there is an additional element to it irrespective of whether or not God is overtly part of the conversation.

5.4.2 Grand metanarrative

The most clearly expressed interviewee concern about integration of Christian faith and narrative ideas resonated with Lyotard’s incredulity towards metanarratives. Don Cupitt

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167 Patton, *Pastoral Care*, 22.
claims that as we seek to “make value out of valuelessness” we will discover in our lives a weave of narrative that will still be made up of personal variations upon the old story of Christ. ... A second thread of narrativity will be provided by the many stories we tell about our search for a final unity of our life and beyond our life. They will be stories of transcendence, stories of nothingness and stories of outsidelessness. They will in one way and another relate how a yearning for something beyond the world becomes chastened and transformed into acceptance of the world. Loss becomes gain, transience becomes eternal life. This make-believe, dogma-less faith will perpetually renew itself by retelling its own stories. What else is there now? And now we can perhaps finally admit that we have after all presented a new master-narrative. It could not be avoided. We found we had lost all the old master-narratives and were now continuously improvising, retelling, embroidering, making it up as we go along. But in relating all this we found that not to have a master-narrative is also still to have one.169

Freedman and Combs’ table below offers four approaches towards a postmodern, narrative and social constructionist view as to how power, knowledge and ‘truth’ are negotiated within families and larger cultural structures:170

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Postmodern, narrative, social construction view</th>
<th>Christian “dimensional” view</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Realities are socially constructed.</td>
<td>Languaged realities are socially constructed. There is more “reality” to human experience than words and language through which social reality is preferably constructed. There is also more to spiritual “reality” than words and language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realities are constituted through language.</td>
<td>Some of the realities are constituted through language, some through symbols, some through rituals, some through sounds, smells, touches etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The emphasis is on the context and the physical senses involved. The more “civilised” the context the more language to it. The First Nations didn’t use language as extensively as humans do today but constructed meaning holistically through language, singing, movement, art, rituals. This too constitutes human realities. Even today.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realities are organised and maintained through narrative.</td>
<td>Realities are organised and maintained through many ways of human expression whereas one is narrative.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Previously-mentioned constituting aspects or even silence may well organise and maintain human realities in many meaningful ways, both personally and communally.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are no essential truths.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Each truth is essential in its own dimension.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truths are essential and absolute to their own dimension and are expressed accordingly within the contexts of a person’s dimensional experiences - social, religious, spiritual, cultural, political, racial, historical, ethnical, temporal, linguistic.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If postmodernity truly claims that there are no metanarratives this would become just another metanarrative, emerging as it might with one answer that works for each and everyone in each situation as Cupitt has already noted. Both metanarratives, if agreed, may be equally valid, each in its own dimension. However, when there is greater openness to multidimensionality, more personal identities may be identified or recognised as a threat to the particularly formed individual in a traditional faith context, a process that could be labelled as the “dictatorship of relativism.” Equally, it could be interpreted as an invitation to multi-storiedness that welcomes and embraces the richness of human experiences in its various expressions. The Church and people of faith do not need to “deny the reality of the multiplicity of stories in the world or to force the many stories into an artificial harmony”, we simply have to echo the focus group unifying prompt to be “faithful to the story of God that makes intelligible the divided nature of the world.”

5.5 Approaches, techniques, methods and applications congruent with narrative ideas

In addition to participant-generated approaches, I believe that additional methods offer a reasonable dialogue with narrative practices in various contexts. I have developed this survey by assuming a Christian and pastoral context where exploration of human experiences may very naturally, if encouraged, lead beyond words and toward images, symbols, sounds, gestures and movements, rituals and eventually silence. Also, Christian and pastoral contexts embrace the whole lifespan, from childhood to old age and even beyond - to funerals and eternal imagination. Narrative practices can explore a person’s experience in all these areas

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171 Stanley Hauerwas as quoted in Piehl. See Piehl, *From Narrative*, 221.
and it is here that this survey makes its integrative contribution. Participants identified some potentially shared methods and techniques. I note them below and add a brief commentary.

- **Interviewing a problem.** Ethan described using two chairs where the second chair is for the ‘problem’ or for the person to sit there and think and respond as a ‘problem’ while interviewed.

- **Experiential and creative ways that encourage sharing stories.** Interviewees described creative initiatives that support storytelling: Sand-play therapy; drawing and painting; dancing; use of music (singing and playing experiential exercises to ‘get a voice’); writing (letters, songs, novels, essays, stories, metaphors, legends); ‘River of life’ (by Peter Nemetschek),\(^\text{172}\) use of movement (walking, postures of prayer, labyrinth, experiential exercises); if in a Christian setting – drawing icons as “searching the face of Jesus” (actually called ‘writing’ an icon in the Orthodox tradition).

- **Use of Symbols.** Lilly’s demonstrated use of symbols includes objects and/or pictures, sacred, religious or not.

- **God as Outsider Witness.** Ethan and Lucy alluded to personal story as God may see it and where God is part of re-membering ‘club of life’ conversations.

- **Narrative and Church Activities.** Jack shared his experience with narrative sermons and Ruby linked narrative approaches to church worship services.

I find, however, that a number of other methods, both with and without faith connotation, can enhance relationships and dynamics within a framework of Christian and pastoral narrative practices.

### 5.5.1 StoryPlay\(^\text{173}\)

Joyce Mills notes the difference between StoryPlay\(^\circ\) and White-Epston’s Narrative therapy and yet I find some common places and shared ideas. This approach is potentially valuable for Christian and pastoral narrative practitioners, especially for those working with children. Mills defines StoryPlay\(^\circ\) as “an Ericksonian, resiliency-based, indirective model of play therapy that focuses on how to identify, access, and utilize inner resources, skills, and gifts as invaluable


\(^{173}\) StoryPlay\(^\circ\) copyright 2015. Joyce C. Mills.
Here we may remember Lilly’s description of narrative practices as “panning for gems.” Mills explains that the goal of StoryPlay® is to “move beyond diagnosis” and to “effect transformational change”, in this case with traumatised children and adolescents. Again, to my mind this has common threads with Narrative therapy although “goal” is perhaps not the language narrative practitioners use, preferring “storying experience,” “exploring,” “journeying” or any other more open and less definite expression. The difference, according to Mills, is that Narrative therapy “asks questions in order to generate experientially vivid descriptions of life events” where “the StoryPlay® therapist utilizes the symptom and all forms of the client’s story to evoke behavioural and emotional transformational change.”

StoryPlay® applies “metaphorical activities called ‘StoryCrafts,’ which provide patients with a resiliency pathway for healing.” Such metaphorical activities are: Life-Story Puzzle and Dreaming Pots. There is a rich field of knowledge and experience in the use of narrative work with seniors. James Woodward, writing on the spirituality of older persons, emphasises the importance of life review through all lifecycle stages and especially for the elderly. At the heart of the ministry of pastoral care, says Woodward, is listening to people through the personal process of articulating meaning from their experience. Therefore in addition to physical, intellectual and social fitness Woodward adds a fourth category – “purpose fitness,” where spirituality can play an important part. Assisting people to review their past helps them to feel purpose and meaning in their lives, to believe that their life has mattered and has impacted on the world.

Furthermore, it helps them resolve continuing or resurgent conflicts, reconcile internal contradictions, overcome problems, and master complicated feelings or relationships with loved ones. Last, but not least, autobiography becomes a cherished legacy to younger generations.

175 Mills, StoryPlay®, 171. Italics by Mills.
176 See Mills, StoryPlay®, 171. Italics by Mills.
177 Note “patient.” There is definitely a difference in wording compared to Narrative therapy.
Shaping a narrative in old age promotes successful adaptation to old age and assists positive choices.\textsuperscript{182}

Woodward sees the narration of stories in the second part of life as a “second flowering” and a work of growth in deepening the relationship with oneself, God, others and the world.\textsuperscript{183} Such a narration invites a person to “the journey inward,” and thus to meet oneself face-to-face, confronting within one’s personal history both good and bad, positive and negative, dark and bright.\textsuperscript{184} It is here that “the need to bring about a new balance between the many opposite aspects of our personalities” emerges. I believe this reflects how narrative approaches can enable many to find healing in creativity by finding their own unique personal authenticity and, in the process, discovering where spirituality may become “the response of the whole person to God.”\textsuperscript{185} The process of aging intensifies the movement from outer to inner world where we “need to learn to befriend the elderly stranger in ourselves.”\textsuperscript{186} Through their inner journey the elderly can mature and bring to birth “wisdom of the heart” and in later years have much to offer in every sphere of life.\textsuperscript{187}

It is exciting to imagine this use of narrative themes, when memories of life are told and re-told so they can “be turned into rich material for future harvesting” because this process of life review through story “initiates a host of reminiscences” to the point where looking back on the journey then becomes a “prayer of reminiscence.”\textsuperscript{188}

Spirituality and narrative can then combine if the aged invite Jesus into “recollection” of their past, perhaps throwing new light on their personal life narratives and identity, simultaneously recognising God’s co-creative role in the world around them.\textsuperscript{189} If we are open to listen carefully to the narratives of our elders, concludes Woodward, it will leave a rich legacy of wisdom for all generations to come.\textsuperscript{190} Woodward’s focus is a practical and helpful one, a

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{184} Woodward, “The Spirituality,” 5.
\textsuperscript{188} Woodward, “The Spirituality,” 10.
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reminder, I believe, that can enrich the ministry of those who work in aged care. It also offers further guidance on what to include in the training and education of Christian and pastoral narrative practitioners.

5.5.2 Narrative gerontology

A very exciting and perhaps not so well known field for narrative practice is working with the elderly and their stories. Narrative gerontology explores how one’s sense of identity changes over time “as a consequence of the continual weaving and reweaving within us of memory, emotion, and meaning.”\textsuperscript{191} Kate de Medeiros argues that for narrative gerontology the types of stories we receive, the genres or cultural frameworks, and the ways in which experience is made known (oral or written) are important.\textsuperscript{192} In narrative gerontology there are three basic types of narratives in focus. 1) \textit{Disembodied narratives} “are texts, transcribed interviews, written stories, and other narratives in which there is a separation between the teller and the listener;” 2) \textit{stories of the moment} “are stories that have been told but either are not committed to text or recording or exist only in the moment until transcribed, when they become disembodied;” 3) \textit{stories of omission} “are the stories that are never told out loud but exist nonetheless.” Stories that are never voiced are considered by Herman Melville and William Faulkner as “the real stories” and Medeiros notes that “unspoken words and stories” can have great potential,\textsuperscript{193} leading us once again to an encounter with apophatic concepts and the language of un-saying and an invitation to explore educationally, pedagogically and therapeutically the ways and boundaries of how to language experiences of omission.

Medeiros describes the genres that compose current narrative gerontology work. Biography, autobiography, memoir, diaries, journals and letters,\textsuperscript{194} join Group storytelling as an alternative to personal narratives which is “more about what the individual has experienced than about who the individual is.”\textsuperscript{195} This too, I find, supports my earlier argument about working with identities rather than with selves. In the context of topics discussed earlier,

\textsuperscript{192} Medeiros, \textit{Narrative}, 17.
\textsuperscript{193} Medeiros, \textit{Narrative}, 33-34.
\textsuperscript{194} Medeiros, \textit{Narrative}, 61-67.
\textsuperscript{195} Medeiros, \textit{Narrative}, 193-195, 195.
Hazan and Raz note that when working with elders’ stories it is as if childhood and old age become ‘Other’ to the “middle life” that is securing its “position of prominence and perspective” while marginalizing the former two.196 This process is based on cultural and societal expectations and understanding of aging, and embedded within are what Medeiros refers to as “big” stories and “small” stories, concepts that are, I believe, similar to dominant or problem-saturated story and alternative story in Narrative therapy.197

Narrative gerontology appreciates the biographical and narrative dimensions of human life and finds working with the “narrative metaphor” to be “essential for honouring the dignity, humanity, and uniqueness of the lives of older persons.”198 Kenyon highlights the value of a narrative approach that is “particularly appropriate to the exploration of such topics as memory and meaning, spirituality and wisdom, as well as the links among them.”199 Narrative gerontology is “inherently multidisciplinary” and yet “does not espouse any one method in particular” but shares “a passion for life-stories, and for the richness and effectiveness of the life-as-story metaphor.”200

5.5.3 Dignity therapy

Dignity therapy was developed by Harvey Max Chochinov at the Manitoba Palliative Care Research Unit in Canada. It is a model of dignity designed specifically to address many of the psychological, existential, and spiritual challenges that terminally ill patients in palliative care and their families face “as they grapple with the reality of life drawing to a close.”201 Dignity therapy seeks “to support a culture of compassion and respect throughout the health care system” and potentially benefit both patients and their families across many generations of the patient’s surviving family.202 It begins with the Patient Dignity question: "What do I need

196 See Medeiros, Narrative, 68
197 Medeiros, Narrative, 103-104.
199 Kenyon, Storying, xvi.
200 Kenyon, Storying, xvii.
to know about you as a person to give you the best care possible?” and the following examples of questions clearly reflect narrative practices and philosophy.203

- Tell me a little about your life history, particularly the parts that you either remember most, or think are the most important. When did you feel most alive?
- Are there specific things that you would want your family to know about you, and are there particular things you would want them to remember?
- What are the most important roles you have played in life (family roles, vocational roles, community service roles, etc.)? Why were they so important to you, and what do you think you accomplished in those roles?
- What are your hopes and dreams for your loved ones?
- What have you learned about life that you would want to pass along to others? What advice or words of guidance would you wish to pass along to your (son, daughter, husband, wife, parents, others)?
- Are there words or perhaps even instructions you would like to offer your family to help prepare them for the future?

Through these questions, the stories and legacy of dying persons are told in their own words, recorded and preserved for generations to come in the form of a booklet that is transcribed from the interview and given to family members.

5.5.4 Validation therapy204

Validation therapy was developed by social worker Naomi Feil through her work with the elderly with cognitive impairment. “The idea behind validation therapy is to ‘validate’ or accept the values, beliefs and ‘reality’ of the person suffering from dementia,”205 and “rather than trying to bring the person with dementia back to our reality, it is more positive to enter their reality.” It is an emphatic way that builds trust and a sense of security through a deep process of entering the story of another.
Reminiscence therapy and validation therapy share some common themes. Ray Galvin refers to “reminiscence as narrative” in pastoring the terminally ill elderly\textsuperscript{206} and nationally recognised websites for dementia care embrace such approaches.

Reminiscence therapy involves talking about things from the past, using prompts such as photos, familiar objects or music. Life story work is usually shared between the person with dementia and a family member, friend, or support worker. A scrapbook or photo album is used to record details of the person’s life experiences, values and beliefs. Sometimes these approaches are combined using a memory box of favourite possessions or memorabilia. There is evidence that reminiscence therapy and life story work, particularly when done one-on-one, can improve mood, wellbeing and some mental abilities such as memory. By talking about who they are, people with dementia can help others focus on them, and not their dementia.\textsuperscript{207}

I find that both validation therapy and reminiscence therapy reflect valuable local knowledges that facilitate encounters in un-easy human situations. This can be helpful for Christian and pastoral carers/counsellors as they expand their views on possible ways to tap memories and tell stories beyond words and in turn, creating another rich area for narrative work where stories beyond words are combined with theatrical methods and examples – narradrama.

One of the research questions for the interviews concerned the specific use of stories or narrative practices in a Christian context and in pastoral work. Many of interviewees mentioned their use of Biblical stories. Discussion of Bibliodrama is just another example of a specific use which adds the elements of drama and thus shares common ground with another approach mentioned – Narradrama. In my view, they all point to various and enriching possibilities as to how to use appropriate narratives according to personal and group interest. In this case it would be Jewish and Christian faith communities.


5.5.5 Narradrama and Narrative theatre

Narradrama, as developed by Pam Dunne, engages creative arts and not just verbal techniques, integrating drama therapy (the intentional and systematic use of drama/theater processes to achieve psychological growth and change) and narrative therapy (a form of psychotherapy using narrative methods). In Narradrama, activities such as role-playing and improvisation are used in conjunction with other art forms to explore meaningful, personal stories. Narradrama taps inner wisdom through a collaborative process based on finding unique moments from our lives when we are most ourselves, and most whom we want to be.

As an extension of these principles, narrative theatre has a more diverse and historical foundation of meanings, traditions and applications. The research findings resonate with one of its applications that is the subject of recent interest and inquiry amongst Narrative therapy practitioners. Developed by Professor Yvonne Sleip from University KwaZulu in South Africa, it is used among refugees by the staff of Ahfad University for women and Ahfad Trauma Treatment Training Center. Practitioners explore “how to go from individual to collective healing using narrative theatre as an approach.” The approach is not only based on Narrative therapy (Yvonne Sleip cooperated with Michael White in its development) it is also partly based on Augusto Boal’s ‘Theatre of the Oppressed’ from Brazil.

The major issue in this kind of narrative theatre work is that traumatic events affect the whole community, developing mistrust and suspicion among community members. Narrative theatre tries to find collective options for ways of dealing with individual problems by drawing on the strength of a community. It also targets the strengths within African culture and embraces the importance of narratives and the oral culture within that context. I find this to be an excellent example of cultural applicability of narrative practices and a possible guideline for Christian and pastoral communities involved in care and counselling.

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208 Pam Dunne’s two texts most closely aligned with this research are Narradrama: Integrating Drama Therapy, Narrative and the Creative Arts and The Narrative Therapist and the Arts.


5.5.6 Bibliodrama

For Peter Pitzele, Bibliodrama is “a form of role-playing in which the roles played are taken from biblical text.” It is a form of midrash and serves not only as a tool for teaching the Bible but also for forming community where the use of biblical narratives meet and connect with the personal story. Bibliodrama interprets Bible text as composed in “black and white fire” where black fire has the printed or written word and white fire “is found in the spaces between the black.” The following quote will be considered at the end of the Discussion:

The black fire is fixed for all time; the white fire is forever kindled by fresh encounters between changing times and unchanging words. The black fire establishes the canonized object we can all see before us; the white space represents the endless potential for the fresh interpretation of that object. Bibliodrama takes place in the open spaces of the text for which the black fire, the black letters, are the boundaries.

Bibliodrama moves from commenting, analysing and speculating on the biblical text which is in a relationship of “I to It” and where the object is mute. There is “no voice other than that with which it has already spoken” toward “I and Thou” and where the biblical narrative gets (finds/achieves) more life and more voice than is captured by the words. It is where “I, the reader, meet the biblical narrative as if I were meeting a living being.” This happens through the role-play of Bibliodrama which describes “voicing” of the biblical text rather than commenting, and engages “stage,” “actor,” “script” and “director.” Bibliodrama happens in the form of “warm-up,” “action” and “reviewing” which follows five elements: de-roling, sharing, exegesis, consulting other sources and processing. The tools of Bibliodrama are: empty chair, echoing and doubling. Empty chair is a playful and concrete way to work with the played character and it combines well with other practices such as interviewing the problem or perhaps as an experiment in externalizing certain elements of the story. Echoing helps to engage players in more complete voicing of their parts and doubling “is a way to get two or more voicing versions of a character in play at a single dramatic moment.” This helps opening

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212 Pitzele, Scripture, 23.
214 Pitzele, Scripture, 28.
up fresh insights “from the group as a whole.” These two last 'techniques' are very similar to the dynamics of re-telling and outsider witness practice in Narrative therapy.

The described model of Bibliodrama is called Bibliolog in Europe. However, European countries (e.g., Switzerland, Austria, Germany, Liechtenstein, Hungary) and Scandinavian countries have their own tradition of what they call Bibliodrama. It is used mostly in a pastoral setting, and as a combination of theology, exegesis and psychodrama deals with elements such as roles, stage, scene, reflection, evaluation, interpretation, and also with body and movement. There are also some visual or conceptual ways that may help storying people’s experiences.

5.5.7 Narragram™

The Narragram™ was developed and copyrighted by Walter H. Bera, and following the concept of genogram, creates maps for working with stories. The scheme is also presented by Laura Béres. “The Narragram™ Concept Map captures the names of the Problems, Effects, and their relationship (symbolised by the two arrows) to the ‘Me, Myself, and I’ domains as they emerge in the interview” and the Narragram™ Timeline “captures the person’s stories in a sequence across time” considering his or her “why” evaluations about beliefs, hopes, dreams, intentions, values, purposes, and visions of life and commitments.

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215 Pitzele, Scripture, 48.
My conclusion from participant themes and subsequent discussion is that both concepts can also serve as important practical tools for Christian and pastoral narrative practitioners.

### 5.5.8 Life Maps: Conversations of the Journey of Faith

Even before the emergence of a narrative therapy, maps for the journey were used in the Christian context. Jerome Berryman edited a book about Life Maps in 1978, explaining that they were designed to contribute towards “healing the word ‘faith,’” but not by rendering a definitive statement of its meaning. The goal here is to awaken the dormant and often dull conversation by presenting the stories of true explorers who have returned from their journeys with new information and excitement about faith.”\(^{219}\) Although they do not use constructivist ideas, Life Maps provide an interesting historical reference for Christian interpretation of similar language constructs and also as an invitation to further explore the concept of faith maps with integrated social construction ideas. Berryman suggests that “Life Maps is a book that plays with the metaphor of the journey and of mapping the journey.”\(^{220}\) Interestingly Life Maps use “very ancient and broadly used” images of the journey as “our common metaphor for living”, and journey is an oft mentioned metaphor in Christianity and notably by the interviewees in this research where, as emphasised by liberal theologies, life precedes theology. In summary, there are some general integrational elements that can be explored in the training and education of Christian and pastoral narrative practitioners.


\(^{220}\) Berryman, *Life*, 4. Italics by Berryman.
5.5.9 Supervision and narrative practice

Narrative practices can certainly be very appropriate for supervision and there are examples of this on the Dulwich web site. However, for the purposes of this research, I will narrow the focus to Peter Powell’s biblical-narrative therapy as a response to power and authority and discuss its use in pastoral supervision.\footnote{Peter Powell, \textit{Story Whispering: an Introduction to Biblical-narrative Therapy} (Sydney: Pastoral Counselling Institute, 2015).} Powell claims he began developing his model in 1984 as a narrative model that is integrated with attachment theory to offer supervision respectfully with the story of the other person as they describe what it is they are doing in ministry. Together we look at the story as the container of the wisdom, and as a team, allow the story to teach us what directions ministry can take. A critical element in the method is to stay curious rather than irritated and to never try and ‘understand’ the story but let the story teach its own meaning. The willingness to stay ‘ignorant’ until the story reveals what needs to be known is another important element.\footnote{From: “List of Supervisors,” Uniting Church in Australia – Synod of NSW & ACT, accessed June 30, 2016, \url{http://nswact.uca.org.au/media/1333/List-of-Supervisors.pdf}.}

Powell presents ideas of Story Whispering, Informed Ignorance, Curiosity versus Irritation and allowance for the distorted anti-social story to become the main source of information. He summarises the biblical-narrative approach for ministers within an Australian denomination:

- Human relationships are ethically and community focused; consequently, relationships are not person-centred but Christ-centred and can become quite challenging (prophetic) for the individual and the community.
- We must give up the ‘arrogance’ of knowing to enter the mystery of the story of the other (informed ignorance).
- We welcome ‘ignorance’ as a gift that leads to curiosity, rather than a threat.
- We maintain the discipline of being more curious about the story than irritated by it.
- We recognise the complex interplay of cultural, gender and personal stories.
- We go where the story invites us, in terms of time and place; consequently, it will not always be conducted within the comfort zone of the church.
- The human rights of all persons are a priority; even those who abuse.
- We are personally committed to living and modelling the biblical narrative. For those without a particular spiritual/religious affiliation this still means modelling the moral and ethical values contained within the biblical narrative.\footnote{“Grevillea – November 2012,” Parramatta Nepean Presbytery, accessed June 30, 2016, \url{http://pnp.unitingchurch.org.au/files/Grevillea%20Nov%202012.pdf}.}
I see Powell’s explanation connecting with this research at a number of points although, as I mention later when discussing educational space, I have heard some narrative practitioners preferring the term “co-vision” to “supervision” because the former indicates less of an expert position to the process and relationship.

5.5.10 Narrative funerals

Narrative approaches are used in various rituals within Christian tradition but also within personally created rituals and ceremonies about life, celebration, transition, grieving, funerals and church worship. I believe the spirit of narrative therapy ideas can help to co-create ceremonies and rituals with a faith content that may also be enriched by this partnership.

Steve Rose, a minister and a narrative practitioner from Melbourne, graciously shared his article about narrative funerals with me before its official publication. Rose writes about narrative funerals as a respectful way to design the ritual together in a co-creation between the family members and the minister. Rose feels fortunate that his pastoral experiences have encouraged him to

… decentre (my)self as the expert in funerals, and privilege their knowledges, experiences and wisdom. In doing so I have observed families constructing with each other the right way to say goodbye and hullo again. We laugh, cry and tell stories together, traveling at first the barren paths of grief into a meaningful new relationship. I have been taught by those I have briefly mentioned and so many more, that a funeral/remembrance/celebration service is not about the what, where, and when of tradition, but about the stories and meanings attributed to those stories. The symbolism and co-construction of the service flows from those meanings. The service itself may not be as important as what happens before and after. I’ve begun to wonder more about when re-membering can happen, when it’s helpful, when it’s not.

5.5.11 Silence and narrative practices

The notion of metaphors of stories and meanings of silence in Charmaz’s constructivist grounded theory enables us to develop another integrated perspective. She writes that “we cease to use the term ‘story’ as metaphor and have come to view it as concrete reality, rather

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224 The article will be published by Dulwich Centre late 2016.
225 unpublished article – Steve Rose, “A Narrative Funeral - an exploration in re-membering.”
than a construction we place on these data.” Part of the argument about stories, says Charmaz, concerns silences, from individual and organisational to those of the social world and societal patterns. She notes Clark’s “situational mapping” as a new grounded theory tool that shows “action and inaction, voices and silences, at varied levels of analysis.” Charmaz observed, for example, what silence reveals about absent organisational alignments, saying that “mapping those silences, in their relation to active alignments, can render invisible social structure visible.” This is conceptually close to the construct of “absent but implicit” in narrative therapy.

On the other hand, as discussed earlier regarding different connotations of “thick” and “thin,” silence might be viewed from the dimension of social interactions as something troublesome, while in the spiritual dimension silence might be praised as wisdom, morality, mystery or an attained sophisticated level of contemplative prayer life. Co-created interpretation again emerges as a dimension of human relationships and contexts.

I believe narrative practitioners can fruitfully explore silence within mindfulness, meditation and contemplation. Lectio Divina is also an experience beyond words and yet still has inherent meaning and the possibility of “storying.” Silence may also be explored as a refuge from word-noise or within its apophatic elements. Silence was, and still is, highly valued throughout the history of Christianity: the Orthodox tradition of hesychasm; Catholic tradition of contemplation; Protestant Quaker tradition; and Quietist experiences. It is worth exploring how silence plays a role in narrating life experience, for a faith context specifically. What is the content of transcendental silence? Hence, anywhere through the journey, silence may assert itself, and remain so.

These numerous ways of integrating narrative principles with Christian spirituality and spiritual care and they combine to create a foundation for the supplementary discussion

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227 Charmaz, Grounded Theory, 527.
that follows. How can these principles be expressed, with practical integrity, in a model for training, education and formation of Christian and pastoral carers and counsellors?

5.6 A model for training, education and formation of Christian and pastoral carers and counsellors

It seems from interview findings that people, students or future counsellors don’t need another box, another model, another ‘better’ knowledge. What they may lack in today’s education is – space. The space to be themselves, the space they will be invited to co-create as equals, the space they may choose to call ‘my space.’ According to interviewees they might not seek so much for answers in education but rather seek the safe space to ask questions. They do not need curriculum as much as relationship. They don’t look for God completed but God emerging.

In Christian liturgical theology there seems to be more focus on a theology of place, especially as a place where liturgy happens or when discussing church architecture. Certainly words and meanings of place and space often intertwine. In this research, focus group participants defined space much more broadly than just physical space and affirmed the need for a relational space that is almost the ‘product’ of human endeavour. This concept provides the tone of the discussion that follows.

5.6.1 Local knowledge for globalised teaching

The research data clearly indicates that teaching has to be, or become localized. There is hardly any expert knowledge that is uniquely and commonly found in each participant’s stories, either professional or spiritual. However, very rich local knowledges emerged. This suggests that future global knowledge will continue to grow, develop and increase in quantity and quality if it acknowledges and appreciates local knowledge and everyday contextual experiences. Therefore, it might be that there is no need to educate ‘experts’ but rather to build communities that support locals in their everyday life. The concept is not new. We are aware of social movements that develop social systems more supportive of the core family and small community than they are of institutionalised care or interventions. An example of this may be seen in Scandinavian countries where the power to decide and organise formal
care and day-to-day care is given to municipalities. The popular TED talks are examples of local knowledge becoming global. How does this relate to Christian faith and church contexts?

Naturally there is wide diversity and each tradition can itself give the best answer. Perhaps the guiding rule might be that the bigger the organisation the harder it is for local knowledge to be recognised. Yet, as with any rule, it depends again on many variables.

5.6.2 The model without the model
My search for a model of education began with this PhD research and actually ended with the model without the model. It is a ‘model’ that doesn’t want to be defined, a ‘model’ that constructs itself upon the place and within the space of its occurrence, and a ‘model’ that is co-created anew every time, according to its participants. Does it mean there are no structures, units of study or course requirements? Certainly not. There will always be guidelines, themes, topics, content. However all the educational elements that come together to construct a course are, or can be, subject to the flow of conversation and may be influenced, changed, challenged or modified according to the student group present. This is as an ongoing process for the life of the study class. It is a ‘model’ that allows educational space to be seemingly chaotic from time to time but it stays confident in a communal search for wisdom, all the time appreciating specific needs and inviting local knowledges. Consequently, the space will be very different depending on different contexts, cultures and continents and will necessarily and always reflect the group whose creation it becomes. What is predictable however is the specific transfer and sharing of knowledge and experiences within (among) all group participants. Such a space carefully considers the issues of otherness.

5.6.3 Educational space to explore identities of otherness
If the person is ‘the other’ he or she has to be re-placed with someone who is like ‘I’, or ‘me.’ This re-placement can happen in many dimensions ranging from physical, emotional, intellectual, social, spiritual, religious, racial, gendered, sexual, political or any other name we

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can ascribe to the domain of human experience. In this case 'my space' becomes spaceless for 'the other' as long he or she may become 'I', or 'me.' Yet 'my space' then ceases to be flexible and becomes rigid and stiff, looking sturdy and firm from the outside, but becoming fragile and brittle internally. This 'my space' is alluded to by interviewee Jack, who noted that in educational space participants will engage in decision-making. The academic space that we as educators invite them into is also their space. On the other hand this becomes more 'my space' as the person becomes more empowered and more influential within such a space as collaborative mutuality develops.

Jack also called for this educational space to reflect a therapeutic as well as an educational relationship, perhaps something like what Mishka Lysack describes as a 'dialogic space' that should be cultivated within therapy’s dialogic relationship.

In the creation of a conversational domain in family therapy, each person seeks to move beyond objectifying the other as ‘an Other’ with no necessary relational connection to oneself. In the dialogic space of therapy, it is hoped that both the client and the therapist will strive to maintain themselves and protect each other as subjects.230

This, continues Lysack, opens space for felt meanings and also maps regions of one’s relationship ecology that are “marked by decay from I-Thou into I-It relations”, and this helps restore the former.231 Therefore the very process and methodology of training, education and formation should reflect narrative ideas and practices as well as open up space for students to practice this with each other in what eventually becomes the ‘working model’ for their Christian and pastoral practice outside the class. In this way externalisation, deconstruction, mapping and other skills can become as living tissue and not mere postmodern ideas cognitively configured to be engaged and reproduced by memory.

5.6.4 Educational and counselling space as sacred space

Each person coming to consult with a carer or counsellor comes with his or her historical, linguistic, cultural, philosophical and religious spaces. Interviewee Lilly was the first to

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230 Mishka Lysack, “Relational Mindfulness and Dialogic Space in Family Therapy,” in Mindfulness and the Therapeutic Relationship, ed. Steven F. Hick and Thomas Bien (New York: The Guilford Press, 2010), 141-158. This quote page 149-150.

231 Lysack, Relational, 150.
describe the counselling room as a “sacred space.” This is where all the personal spaces come together. In a Christian context we may also talk about spiritual space that, for example in a monastic milieu, has two different kinds of spaces, namely “the center or heart of the practice” (i.e., where contemplative practice exists) and “the environment that surrounds practice.” Both these dimensions, according to Blée, “are inseparable from the contemplative life and direct us not to separate the universal from the particular, unity from diversity.” The same inseparableness may be created in the educational space we are considering and thus express an inseparable link between personal and pastoral life dimensions. This clearly resonates with the indication from the research findings that any educational enterprise should be seen from the perspective of a multidimensional, integrated spiritual journey. Blée, referring to MacInnes, suggests that “the pilgrimage of the mystic is not a journey to some external shrine, but to the sacred space within the self.” Therefore the sacred spaces of Christian educational and counselling rooms inevitably meet the “sacred space” inside of each person and in the process witness that “unity from diversity.” Blée’s description of a monk’s experience accurately echoes the character of the ‘educational space model’ emerging from this research.

He outlines the spiritual dialogical encounter within the desert of otherness as “the space of permanent retreat, constant questioning, and deep communion. There is no method that one must follow; all that is needed is heartfelt openness in one’s relationship to the other.” Perhaps the idea of “no method” is a bit too harsh and idealistic but the dynamic reality of “heartfelt openness” is not too much of a fairytale given that the educational dimension conveyed by interviewees envisioned just such a context. This also aligns with the picture of occasional “chaos” in educational spaces and counselling practice as described by the focus group participants. Interviewee Sue: “So narrative therapy would offer this really precious space where they get to tell their story.” This story is then translated into Pitzele’s understanding of Bibliodrama where educational space invites participants to read the “white

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233 Blée, The Third, 179.
234 Blée, The Third, 181.
fire” spaces in training, those alive, changing and always newly created realities that surround us.235

There is a clear link to the dynamics of pastoral psychotherapy. Brian W. Grant views pastoral psychotherapy as the play of God and (in?) a sacred space. “God enters psychotherapy’s sacred space through broader community, the therapist, and the client.”236 The community creates the space for pastoral psychotherapy (as any other), says Grant, and invites God into it. Therapist expectations initiate what is going to happen in this space “as a locus of God’s action, as a point of transition between different worlds,” where God works through community but also directly “works in and through the therapist to hallow the space.”237 This space is hallowed “by the therapist’s quiet readiness to receive” and for Grant it is a state of “expectation, of undemanding readiness, of unquestioned certainty that what the client does and says expresses a truth central to, but extending beyond the client, from which both parties present can learn all that needs to be known.”238

Although constructed for use in pastoral psychotherapy I believe this description well describes the educational space and atmosphere, especially for Jack who argued that space should reflect a therapeutic relationship, not just an educational one. Grant believes that hallowing the space requires a “readiness to be alive to what appears in the space ... relishing the experience of not yet knowing ... and maintaining the unsaturated status of our preconceptions so they may be realized anew in this hour.”239 Besides community and therapist, clients also hallow the space with the particular meanings they ascribe to experiences they are sharing.240 For Grant, the educational space considers the community (faith and other), the “educator” and the students as collaborative elements of co-construction. Each party can explore what is necessary to create hallowed space in order for new theological or professional knowledges and interpretations to emerge.

235 See under 'Bibliodrama' in this discussion.
237 Grant, A Theology, 110.
238 Grant, A Theology, 112.
239 Grant, A Theology, 115.
240 Grant, A Theology, 118-121.
Paul Matheny suggests that God “has created a space in this world for faith communities to ‘do theology.’ This space is temporal and cultural, and as such is a part of the history and narratives of peoples.”\textsuperscript{241} Sigurd Bergmann extends this by claiming that a sacred space is delimited physically but not mentally from the profane space. The signification of the holy also gives meaning to the profane space. ... In pastoral, contextual theology we try to integrate different meanings of sacred and profane spaces.\textsuperscript{242}

Sacred space may therefore be open to exploring ‘sacred narratives’ and ‘re-storying faith,’ as in Suzanne Coyle’s example in the subchapter on integrative elements.

5.6.5 Thin and thick

Narrative therapy alludes to ‘thin conclusions’ and ‘thin descriptions’ of dominant or problem-saturated stories that limit or narrow space for life’s complexities and contradictions. Thin descriptions lead to the thin conclusions of people’s identities that most often produce negative effects in life. The narrative practitioner therefore looks for ‘thick’ descriptions of people’s experiences and for alternative stories of identities. This helps people break away from the influence of the problem into what is recognised as the multi-storiedness of human experiences.

However as in DNA structure, Celtic knot patterns or Croatian wattle, it seems that thick and thin are intertwined in descriptions of different realms of human experience. In Celtic spirituality “thin places” are considered to be places where the boundary between heavenly and earthly things is especially thin and where humans are able to sense the divine more intensely. These spaces are also “sacred spaces.” Margaret Silf writes about a thin place as:

... where the invisible and the visible, in yourself and in all creation, can become reconnected. For the Celts there was never any shadow of a doubt that these two worlds, the invisible and visible, the material and the spiritual, were one. ... Indeed, we speak even today of some places as being ‘thin places’ meaning that the presence of the invisible and the spiritual in those places is almost palpable. Our Celtic forebears revered such ‘thin places’ as ‘sacred space’.\textsuperscript{243}

\textsuperscript{241} Paul Matheny, \textit{Contextual Theology: The Drama of Our Times} (Eugene: Pickwick Publications, 2011), 44.
This very much interconnects with earlier statements about apophatic theology and also indicates that in Christian and pastoral narrative conversations thin places may have different meanings for conversational partners on the subject of faith.

Similar links with pastoral theology are evident. Swinton and Pattison, from the context of spirituality and healthcare, identify another aspect of educational space as defined in this research. They use the phrase “moving beyond clarity” and a thin and vague understanding of spirituality in nursing care.\(^{244}\) They define “limit language” as denoting “something that is not necessarily concrete so much as it designates an area of limit beyond which it may not be clear what can and cannot intelligibly be said.”\(^{245}\) Spirituality then, according to authors, might be seen as a limit language that “tends to function as a way of naming absences rather than presences”\(^{246}\) within healthcare provision. By recognising and naming an absence, spirituality “names a point of resistance against particular inadequacies” within healthcare.\(^{247}\) They therefore “argue for a description of spirituality that does not assume spirituality to be a rich, thick theoretical concept, but rather assumes it to be a thin and vague construction that … is defined by its practical utility rather than its conceptual clarity.”\(^{248}\)

A thin description of spirituality would therefore serve as a mode of contextual language that seeks to highlight absences and deficits within healthcare provision. In this way spirituality can become “a point of resistance” that also challenges “the politics of time” which seems to be ever more lacking in current healthcare providers and in addition, can “offer a metaphorical container” and sensitizing language for currently unavailable, absent and yet needed healthcare services and provisions.\(^{249}\) The world of spiritually companioning people in a healthcare setting for me sounds very much like a natural place for narrative practices to make a contribution. This example supports the use of narrative practices for Christian and pastoral carers/counsellors no matter what setting they work in. A thin and vague understanding of spirituality seems, in a very postmodern way, to challenge and deconstruct dominant concepts.

\(^{245}\) Swinton, *Moving*, 231.
\(^{246}\) Swinton, *Moving*, 231.
\(^{247}\) Swinton, *Moving*, 232.
\(^{249}\) Swinton, *Moving*, 234.
and knowledges of the helping professions and yet remains true to its own heritage, tradition and accumulated wisdom.

Miroslav Volf also describes a thick and thin religion. The former “entails a stronger, more conscious commitment to a faith rooted in a concrete tradition” and the latter “entails nothing more than a vague sense of religiosity whose content is shaped by factors other than faith (such as national or economic interests).” The former “actually serves to create and sustain a culture of peace and the latter “may potentially lead to violence.” Such a thick religion, in perhaps my reinterpretation of Volf’s understanding, may well be represented within the argument of this research by multi-storied Christianity, and its traditions and wisdoms that should not be lost because of a language acceleration effect.

5.6.6 The space model
There is a rich field of ideas that engage the concept of space in various disciplines beyond theology such as sociology, architecture, geography, physics, philosophy and anthropology. The focus of participants in this study was on education. What will the space for training, education and formation of Christian and pastoral carers/counsellors look like?

Complementing the characteristics given and described by focus group participants are two models of how Narrative therapy is conceptualised in two different contexts. One is in New Zealand and the other at the Dulwich Centre, Adelaide. As a reference point, we remember that the emphasis of the model discussed with the focus group centred on four main assignment tasks: reading (articles, books); writing (reflections, comments); recording (of practical work); and presenting (in written and oral form). These constructs come from the Dulwich model and will be discussed later in more detail.

5.6.7 The New Zealand model
This model resonates strongly with the data analysis. Kathie Crocket and Elmarie Kotzé address narrative/postmodern perspectives in counsellor education where “storying of

250 Miroslav Volf, “Christianity and Violence” (presented at the University of Pennsylvania, March 6, 2002).
professional identity” has a central place. In educating counsellors, Crocket and Kotzé work to make visible the engaged narratives or storylines of personal identity, learning identity and professional identity. They draw together two dimensions, “the storylines of their own lives and the counselling practices that they learn, which emphasise narrative counselling practices, social constructionist notions, and poststructuralist ideas.” This model, as the authors indicate, reflects ethical and epistemological resonance between content and process.

Education even begins with admission to the program where the micro-construction and wording of the letter sent to prospective students establishes an initial educational discourse. It is a two-way process where possibility of choice, as expressed in the letter, shapes the admission process as a “reciprocal process of selection” and “declares a position on use of power.” They assert that “purposeful attention to language in the letter to applicants opens alternative positions within the discourses of education, competition, and selection.” For example the question would be asked in the application form: “What abilities would you most like us to appreciate about you in relation to your present helping or counselling knowledge?” With this question the applicants are invited to adopt the posture of considering educators as an audience which reflects principles of social construction where people construct identities in the social realm and according to the audience. This reversal reflects empowering narrative practice.

In the New Zealand model learning is viewed as a social and relational activity “rooted in discursive, rather than individualistic, psychology” where student-to-student relationships are developed collegially to build “learning communities” and where they “act as audiences to each other.” As the first classroom activity students tell stories of relationships before being formally taught the counselling skills of re-membering conversations. The teaching activities emphasise learning as a social and relational activity and offer a multi-layered sidestep from an individualistic competitiveness. This in turn “destabilizes traditional educational

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252 Crocket and Kotzé, Narrative, 393-394.

253 Crocket and Kotzé, Narrative, 395.

254 Crocket and Kotzé, Narrative, 395.
psychology’s construction of the person as an individual learner.” This resonates with Gergen’s suggestion that knowledge is not something that people posit but rather something they do together. The goal is to help students develop their own learning identities by offering multiple learning positions, the opportunity to story their learning and the ability to “take up positions of active authors of their ongoing professional learning.”

Students offer reflections, acknowledgments, comments and questions on academic assignments such as readings or video assignments of counselling conversations. A summative assessment (grade plus clear, evaluative comments) is given by educators as well as a formative assessment designed to shape the student’s skills. Students submit a video assignment with transcripts that acknowledge “the reciprocal producing and reproducing of discourses of evaluation, measuring, and assessing.” Students are invited into active storytelling of their experiences of assessment in “order to grow and shape experiences of reflexive practice” and to experience shared power between students and educators. Transcripts are part of the assessment of counselling skills and reflexivity in practice, and student response is aligned with the following criteria: by making inner dialogue visible – theorizing the dialogue in terms of witnessing positions; and by identifying the discourses that shape conversational movements.

On the macro-constructionism level that deals with discourses of education, further assessment comments are offered to students in written format or as audio recordings where the educator’s voice becomes known and accountable in order to support students in storying their learning. Four actions appear on the recording: acknowledge the development of the practice; comment on skills that need attention; reference relevant literature to enhance development; and extend invitations to discuss the ideas with the student’s supervisor. Students are then asked to engage in reading and responding to the assessment and, within a dialogue, to write their own reflection on the assessment where each step of the process gives them opportunity to “reposition themselves in relation to their practice and learning.”

255 Crocket and Kotzé, Narrative, 396.
256 Crocket and Kotzé, Narrative, 397-398.
The New Zealand model emphasises outsider witnessing practices so that students can practice skills in the class, and witness to one another “as they each story their own learning and professional identity,” and also “take outsider witnessing skills into client practice.” Learning from the outsider witness process is carefully and incrementally scaffolded to students with online discussion-board questions and also online discussion questions about “compassionate witnessing.” Assignments engage social justice and cultural readings with guidelines for responses to expression (phrases, sentences), image (evoked), resonance (experience touched), and transport into writing that embraces a person’s hopes, thoughts and ideas in regard to their future practice.

The authors conclude “that counselling in any land cannot be separated from its people’s cultural narratives.” Both authors see that storying of professional identity is a central task of supervision that works best with students when “conceptualized as a two-way process” that shapes understanding of their collaborative contribution to supervision. They point to the importance of language and discuss with students the implication of some familiar terms in supervision such as “receiving supervision” or “supervisee.” Now we know that besides supervision there is also ‘intervision’ as another model of supervising counsellors. However, in informal conversations I had with narrative practitioners in Australia, I heard them using ‘co-vision’ as the term they would prefer for that activity.

In conclusion, some elements from the New Zealand model may be added to the fourfold model of this research based on the Dulwich model: the sharing of students’ stories (as discussed and recommended by focus group participants); dialogue that engages an educator’s written and audio recorded assessments in order to enable students to reflectively re-write assignments; teaching complex theories through storying, thus connecting with personal experiences and ethno-cultural identities; and teaching supervision as narrative practice (or perhaps exploring co-vision as an optional reframing).

257 Crocket and Kotzé, Narrative, 399.
258 Crocket and Kotzé, Narrative, 400.
259 Crocket and Kotzé, Narrative, 399.
260 Crocket and Kotzé, Narrative, 400-402.
261 Crocket and Kotzé, Narrative, 403-404.
5.6.8 The Dulwich Centre model: A critical and integrative commentary

There are various Dulwich teaching models. I’ll only address the international training program in Narrative therapy as presented by Cheryl White and David Denborough. The review reflects 15 main training aspects as defined by the authors and they all might be considered for integration with the characteristics of the space model as defined by research participants. Hence, this structure gives a frame for the content constituted by the elements extracted from focus group conversations regarding space. I have developed educational questions below from each category that reflect participant response and consequent analysis, and offer the following as an integrated model that builds upon the Dulwich Model.

(1) Locating in history and culture the values and commitments that influence practice.
Narrative therapy asserts that the “skills and knowledges of living are not located internally, inside people’s identities,” but are the “products of history and culture” and therefore have to be located by each participant through the learning process. Therefore the goal of education would be to trace the origins of certain expressions of each therapist’s skills and values in their own work and personal life, and to identify the implications for their teaching (“range of possibilities for exploration in teaching”), rather than locating those skills and values “solely in the realm of ‘professional’ knowledge.” The history of being drawn to developing these skills may be understood at this stage.

Educational question: How does the history and culture of skills and values of Christian and pastoral carers/counsellors influence their work?

(2) Questioning normalising judgement / questioning the effects of all one thinks and does.
This implies questioning practices of normalising judgment where we may ask: The “measurement of people’s lives against certain uniform standards” may be explored while “determination to question the real effects of everything one thinks and does as a practitioner” will be encouraged in students, hoping that this will in turn generate critical

262 Based on: Cheryl White and David Denborough, “Developing training courses which are congruent with narrative ideas,” in A Community of Ideas: Behind the Scenes, ed. C. White and D. Denborough (Adelaide: Dulwich Centre Publications, 2015), 101-125.
263 White and Denborough, Developing, 102-103.
reflective practice. The aim is to develop skills in “discerning the different effects of certain ways of approaching therapeutic conversations” to encourage student openness to “rigorous and direct feedback” about their work. Throughout the training period there is a consistent search for feedback about the real effects of the program on participant learning, including “discussions about people’s preferred ways of giving and receiving feedback.”

Educational questions:
- What is ‘normal’?
- In relation to what and whose standards is this ‘normal’?
- What are the real effects of thinking and acting based on that ‘normal’?

(3) Engaging with a narrative metaphor for training.

Students explore “their stories of becoming therapists” so that the teaching context may involve the authoring and re-authoring of students’ identities as therapists. In this way unique outcomes can be identified and outsider-witness practices and definitional ceremonies may also constitute part of the training. Participants may also be encouraged to invite their family members, friends or colleagues “to act as witnesses to their learning.” The use of a narrative metaphor also enables an “alternative way of conceptualising the relationship of teaching and learning” to be more collaborative and creative. One of the key tasks of the training “is to try to enable participants to think critically and in questioning ways.” This third aspect may be somewhat similar, in my view, to storying professional identity in the New Zealand model and it is also in accordance with the focus group results.

Educational questions:
- Why did you become a pastoral carer (or counsellor)?
- Who would you invite from your family members, friends or work colleagues to witness this part of your learning?
- How do we teach pastoral care or counselling students to think critically in relation to knowledges they have internalised?
- How do we employ other ways, methods, techniques, ideas, and people, and still continue to explore “collaborative and unpredictably creative ways” while yet remaining faithful to the Christian and pastoral teaching context?

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264 White and Denborough, Developing, 103-105.
265 White and Denborough, Developing, 105-107.
(4) Considering and de-centring the stories of participants’ own lives.
Notions of de-centred practice are relevant within a teaching context. When histories of each participant’s values, personal experience and story are acknowledged, de-centred practices may offer a way of conceptualising the importance of those experiences and stories “without this being given priority over other considerations.”

Educational questions:
- What is your experience of this?
- How valuable is this for you?
- Do you remember earlier times or occasions where this value was present in your life?

(5) Acknowledging multiple responsibilities and accountabilities.
Dulwich faculty consider themselves “accountable to students in relation to their learning experience” by “acknowledging the significant investment participants make … [by] developing transparent processes, quality of teaching, offering what was advertised, taking care with learning context.” Part of the accountability is also teaching participants a different set of responsibilities for expecting future encounters with people who will consult them. That will include “giving feedback, challenging or questioning pathologising practices, engaging participants in considerations of ethical practice, encouraging participants to be as good as they can be, questioning professional privilege.” Faculty also “feel an acute sense of responsibility/accountability in relation to issues of gender, culture, class, heterosexual dominance, disability and other relations of privilege and marginalisation.”

Educational questions will explore how to:
- acknowledge the significant investment participants make to attend these courses,
- develop transparent processes,
- maintain the quality of teaching,
- offer what was advertised,
- take care about the learning context, etc.
- give feedback,
- challenge/question pathologising practices,
- engage participants in considerations of ethical practice,
- encourage participants to be as good as they can be,

266 White and Denborough, Developing, 107.
267 White and Denborough, Developing, 107-108.
- question professional privilege, etc.
- address issues of gender, culture, class, heterosexual dominance, disability and other relations of privilege and marginalisation.

In a Christian and pastoral educational context even more questions may be explored in relation to various Christian traditions, different theologies, Christian values and spirituality in secular environments.

(6) Using documentation in teaching.
This section provides a critical review of Dulwich teaching practice and identifies patterns and themes that resonate with the data analysis.

Starting questions may be:
- What kind of written assignments are appropriate?
- When?
- How extensive?

The written word is used to enhance the teaching context. Prior to a course beginning participants are invited to document “their hopes and expectations for the course, any obstacles that they can foresee, and any ideas they have that might contribute to overcoming these obstacles.” These hopes and dreams will then be referred to and prioritised throughout the whole course. They will certainly influence a participant’s choice of written or oral presentation and will also help to develop the content of what is taught. Prior to the course a Participant Handbook will offer information about learning derived from previous courses, details about course requirements and resolution processes, and in general it will represent the faculty’s hopes and expectations. Students will be invited to “document their preferred way of raising complex issues” about other students, gender, class, sexuality etc. and their preferred way of feedback. White and Denborough value short reflections based on “writing regular reflections on articles from a structured reading list that “are shaped by the principles of outsider-witness responses.” For example, participants send tapes of their interviews and transcribe a section of these conversations with a written brief description of some of “the key dilemmas, challenges, and enjoyments that were a part of the consultation.” The authors “found that this process of translating the consultation from the spoken word to

268 White and Denborough, Developing, 108.
269 White and Denborough, Developing, 109.
the written word can be almost as generative a learning experience as the supervision session
that then follows.” Collaborative processes also emerge in the end of year projects chosen
by participants where exploration of narrative concepts happens in their own context. An
edition of Course News is produced overnight with live feedback designed to “keep any
interruptions to the teaching at a minimum” and provide a way to respond to questions
“about certain aspects of the teaching.”

Research participants have often noted the importance of integrational dynamics that address
teology and counselling theories as they learn. This reflexive, iterative formational feedback
process offers a telling and re-telling that can provide an ongoing educational environment
that strongly supports narrative practices. At Dulwich, participant handbooks are interestingly
described as an expression of “transparent practice” that enables “participants to read and
understand, in advance, the thinking that informs the training programs we co-ordinate.”

The Dulwich experience includes: self-care during the teaching blocks; understanding of group
dynamics and group process; care in relation to how we speak about each other; reflection on
experiences of inclusion and exclusion and differences of experience; structuring time for
group care; a feminist-informed training context; discussion of sexual and gender identity; and
inviting an audience to review student learning.

Further educational questions:

- How should a Christian/Pastoral Participant Handbook be formed keeping in mind it is
  a document that reflects what we (teaching organisers, faculty...) have learnt over
  time?
- What form of transparent practice should be noted?
- What should participants read and understand, in advance, from the Participant
  Handbook about the thinking that informs the training programs we co-ordinate?

(7) Emphasising discernment and a diversity of ways to practice.

Dulwich training emphasises a “great diversity of ways in which participants can engage with
narrative practices in their own contexts” and as one of the responsibilities of training they
assist participants “to be able to discern between structuralist and non-structuralist

\[\text{White and Denborough, } \textit{Developing}, \text{ 109.}\]
\[\text{White and Denborough, } \textit{Developing}, \text{ 108-110.}\]
\[\text{White and Denborough, } \textit{Developing}, \text{ 118.}\]
\[\text{White and Denborough, } \textit{Developing}, \text{ 118-123.}\]
assumptions and ways of approaching conversations.” An important part of early training is the creation of a context for developing these skills in discernment and to emphasise that there is no one way to engage with narrative ideas given that practices are limitless.

Educational questions:
- What narrative practices and ideas make a good fit to your life and work context?
- How would you converse with a person in a non-structured way in your context?
- What is an optimal context for participants to learn the skills of discernment?

(8) Introducing maps of practice

Michael White’s metaphor of maps of therapeutic practice is foundational for the courses at Dulwich and the faculty “is really interested in richly describing the metaphors of map-making, map-reading and the exploration of landscapes and territories of life.” Students in the Graduate Diploma in Narrative Therapy are expected to demonstrate the use of maps of narrative practice as part of the final year assessment.

Similarly, respondents suggested that maps should be a core element in the education of Christian and pastoral narrative practitioners. Maps specific for that context may be explored and developed.

(9) Poststructuralist understanding of power within teaching

Some writers suggest that poststructuralist understandings that shape narrative practice may also be helpful in understanding the task of teaching. The power of teaching and the creative powers of both students and teachers are a key issue. Feminist ethics on the connection between the personal and the political must also be factored in. In order to develop “critical or radical pedagogies” more is required than just “enabling students to speak in their own voice” or even empowering them. The aim is to focus not so much on negative or repressive aspects of power or even just positive ones, but rather on the creative and real effects (good, bad and indifferent) of student and teacher authority in the learning context. This requires continual reflection upon the practices of power, especially concerning the role of educational

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274 White and Denborough, Developing, 110-111.
275 White and Denborough, Developing, 111-112.
providers and co-ordinators within the training structure. Transparency, formative feedback and an evolving curriculum help this to happen.\textsuperscript{276}

Educational questions:
- How are the personal and the political linked?
- What are the real effects (good, bad and indifferent) of teacher’s and students’ authority in the classroom?
- What techniques are used and invested with power relations?

(10) Expectations of rigor and skill development
Dulwich training highlights “from the very first interaction with applicants” that there are “significant expectations in relation to rigor and skill development” involved in the training.\textsuperscript{277}

Educational question:
- How should the teaching environment support rigor and skill development?

(11) Thinking and practice
White and Denborough believe that “narrative therapy and community work involves developing skills in a range of practices. It also involves understanding the poststructuralist thinking that informs these practices.” They note that learning questioning skills “without appreciating the thinking that informs them, would leave a practitioner with only a very thin understanding of this way of working,”\textsuperscript{278} an insight strongly emphasised by interviewees.

Educational question:
- How should the learning process connect thinking/understanding and practice?

(12) Focusing on the experience of learning and providing many learning methods
Participant goals “for skill development and learning are sought out and responded to” and the aim is always to “stay in touch with participants’ experience of learning throughout the training experience.” Learning methods include didactic teaching, sharing videos of practice, discussions, small group exercises, role-plays, reading, writing reflections, creating a more substantial written paper and an oral presentation. There are “opportunities to send in tape recordings of examples of therapeutic practice (along with a transcript of the tape and a short

\textsuperscript{276} White and Denborough, Developing, 112-114.
\textsuperscript{277} White and Denborough, Developing, 114.
\textsuperscript{278} White and Denborough, Developing, 114-115.
commentary on their experience of the session)” to receive feedback on that. Many of these learning methods are echoed by interviewees and focus group participants.

Educational question:
- How can different learning methods connect with student experience?

(13) Inclusive and acknowledging context

The Dulwich model seeks to enable participants to be recognised for the way they shape the program.

The structure of the program involves participants engaging with the ideas and constantly referring back to how these are used and practised in their own context and in their own ways ... early on in various welcoming events, participants are encouraged to share songs/dances/stories of significance from their local cultures ... certain country groupings or cultural backgrounds often come together in small groups to explore in detail the differing cultural meanings of certain ways of working. In turn, these small groups feedback their perspectives to the entire group.

This may be extended in the Christian and pastoral educational setting to sharing faith stories and exploring cultural aspects of Christianity within a study group, as recommended by research participants.

Educational questions:
- How can the program ensure all participants can make significant contributions?
- How will these contributions be acknowledged?

(14) Enabling community connections beyond the creation of a ‘group identity’

Dulwich training is strongly committed to enabling participants to form community: through welcome events; social evenings with music and song from all countries represented; small group exercises during teaching; occasional study groups; sharing evening meals; weekend social activities. Training providers take considerable care that no participant feels isolated in the learning context. These activities aim toward “building a sense of community and facilitating community connections” rather than towards promoting or creating a group identity. This in turn leads to valuing relationships between participants, or between participants and teacher and also serves to individuate “participants from their own local

279 White and Denborough, Developing, 115.
280 White and Denborough, Developing, 115-116.
context, friendships and colleagues.” Some of the group development activities mentioned above are already common practice in pastoral care and counselling courses at Stirling Theological College, reflecting participant priorities.

Educational question:
- How does the program enable participants to connect with each other?

(15) Inviting practitioners to address issues of privilege and dominance

An important part of the training is to explore our historical legacies and what White and Denborough call our acts of privilege

...(by) teaching about the history of one’s own profession, ... sharing stories of our own inadvertent participation in unfair circumstances and creating opportunities for teachers and students alike to discuss the privilege with which one is bestowed.

Question for students:
- In your opinion, what might be our “acts of privilege” in the view of future generations?

Questions for educators:
- How does one teach a questioning of professional privilege?
- How can we invite therapists into rigorous self-examination of their work?
- How do we engage participants in discussions about matters of privilege and dominance?

The challenge is to be able to hear and respond
to acts of outrage from those most adversely affected by the ways we express this privilege ... to listen and respond to the outrage of those who are marginalised without experiencing this outrage as an affront or a personal wounding.

General and ongoing questions for narrative practices educators may be:
- How do we avoid blurring the distinctions between therapy conversations, teaching discussions, and other everyday forms of interaction?
- How do we structure a context which will facilitate the development of the next generation of teachers of narrative ideas and practice?
- What kind of liaison with teachers do we want to develop?
- What resources should be developed to form reading lists?

281 White and Denborough, Developing, 116-117.
282 White and Denborough, Developing, 117.
283 White and Denborough, Developing, 117-118.
What are the key elements of ‘quality assurance’ through formal feedback, grievance procedures, etc.?  
What are the micro-practices of teaching that help to scaffold participants’ learning?  
How could feedback be offered when participants misunderstand or misrepresent narrative ideas so that it will not be experienced as a criticism of the person?  

Finally, as the existing Dulwich model unfolds the wisdom of almost two decades what are the emerging complementary and enhancing core elements of the educational space model as defined by this research? This ‘model without the model’ lacks a firmly defined structure that is replicable with all people and within all educational contexts, and deliberately so, because emphasising and valuing specific local needs creates a space for such localities to be voiced, appreciated and empowered. Therefore, the space model is an open-to-conversation model that starts with the main structure, as charted in the following section, but it is open at any point to listen, converse with and adjust to the perceived needs and insights of a student cohort.

Although not without its challenges, I believe that such a space model provides an appropriate platform to spotlight with a sense of immediacy the state of contemporary Christianity and detect fields of its deconstruction in today’s world. This kind of educational space invites different theologies or worldviews into conversations that create and enhance the space to enable the journey of personal and professional meaning-making for future Christian and pastoral narrative practitioners.

In summary, the skeleton for the space model follows the following form:

1) Pre-course activities

- A “participant handbook” appropriate for the Christian and pastoral care and counselling teaching context is to be created. Because it will be the first of its kind for the first generation of students it is not assumed that it would build upon the knowledge and experience of previous generations. However, there is a richness of constructs that have emerged from this research that may serve that initial purpose, and the summary at the end of the Data Analysis chapter on space may form a significant part of the participant handbook text.

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284 White and Denborough, *Developing*, 123-125.
• Pre-course activities include establishing relationships with students through phone contacts, emails, and interviews.
• Application documentation should reflect the spirit, values and attitude of the ideas and approaches that will be brought to the course.

2) Course activities

• The main structure will focus on reading (articles, books), writing (reflections, comments), recording (of a practical work), and presenting (in written and oral form).
• Content, teaching activities, assignments and evaluation will be shaped by the research results, with additional recommendations from the New Zealand and Dulwich models.
• The storylines of student lives will engage both personal and professional histories and will be shared, explored and used for storying their past, present and future. That storying will intertwine with learning postmodern theories based on examples close to their own particular life experiences and expressed through: questioning normalising judgements and their effects; exploring an epistemology of power and knowing, especially in regard to helping professions’ power-knowledges; engaging with narrative metaphor and the use of maps of narrative practices; acknowledging multiple responsibilities and accountabilities; combining thinking and practice with inclusiveness of context and consideration of the limitless application possibilities of narrative practices.
• The process of learning will be careful to provide de-centering practice between both students and teachers with a wide range of learning methods included.
• The educational space will be faith-sensitive and open to exploring spiritual narratives and the re-storying of faith experiences.
• Pre-readings will be given between the lectures for the main topics of the next class.
• Reflections from teaching faculty will be given continuously throughout.
• Where possible, teaching staff should be from various contexts and workplaces so that a rich variety of experiences, local knowledges and storylines may be available.
• Throughout the whole of its life the course is to be co-created with the student group for the benefit of all. Personal and professional endeavours will seek to include and acknowledge particularities.

These core elements of this space, as expressed by research participants and as presented at the end of the Data Analysis chapter, compose the content and the qualities for training, education and formation of Christian and pastoral care and counselling narrative practitioners. The following section summarises the conclusions of this research project.
FURTHER RESEARCH AND CONCLUSION

“Our prayer should become a prayer of complete silence in the heart. When we can ‘be still and know that I’m God.’ The prayer of silence, the prayer of hesychia, of inner silence, of inner peace. Because words are the language of this world and the silence is the language of the world to come. But, the word and the silence are one.”

Archbishop Lazar Puhalo, Abbot of the Monastery of All Saints, Dewdney, Canada

A number of areas may become the focus of further studies in relation to narrative ideas and practices or to a Christian and pastoral care and counselling agency. Based on my interests, and after being formed and informed by this research I have highlighted the following guidelines or topics:

1) Set up a process to explore the scope of people’s dimensional theologies with a view to ongoing research into dimensional care and counselling be it Christian, pastoral, or any other.

2) Research the differences and similarities of practice application in the contexts of professional Christian counselling and in the pastoral ministry of care and counselling.

3) Explore God’s ‘narrative self’ or rather ‘narrative identities’ and the relationship to ‘personal identities.’

4) Study of the meaning of Logos and aspects of the Word and a word – oral, written and experienced as personal life.

5) Explore aspects of language acceleration effect and its impact on Christian and pastoral care and counselling, today and throughout history.

6) Research the possibility of translating various traditions of Christian and pastoral soul-care into today’s postmodern language.

7) Research and experiment with community and group narrative practices with individuals, couples and families within and without the Christian and pastoral context.

8) Explore the social construction of pastoral care and counselling through the history of Christianity and across all churches and traditions.

285 Psalm 46:10
9) Research and evaluate the application of specific narrative practices such as Bibliodrama, Narradrama or Narrative Theatre with an inherent and respectful comparison of faith or non-faith contexts.

10) Consider cross-cultural study of narrative practices in different cultural and faith contexts through identifying the intertwining of cultural and Christian identities and characteristics as they are expressed in various, context-particular narrative practices.

11) Explore the metaphor of journey in Christianity and narrative practice alongside experimental development and application of maps of narrative practices that involve knowledges and experiences specific to the faith context.

12) Study the theoretical bases for medical, healthcare, social and pastoral services. In particular, note how they distance themselves from disempowering power-knowledges about human persons as they embrace the co-creating possibilities of empowering life-metaphors based on people’s multiple identities.

Conclusion

66.7% of Christian counsellors who were questionnaire respondents found Narrative therapy within some range of importance for their practice and 28.6% found it most or very important. In 86% of the cases they made that choice because it aligned with the counsellor’s personal Christian faith. In 79% of the cases they described Narrative therapy as a good choice because it aligns with the context of contemporary life. Integration of narrative practices is a slow, developmental and continuous process that sometimes includes the integration of wisdom from other cultures, because in a multi-cultural context people have different grand-narratives and interact with them in diverse ways. The goal of the practitioner is to find peace with all sorts of background differences recognising that integration emerges from a spiritual journey and personal narratives are embedded in metanarratives.

Narrative practices are integrated as a way of being within and without therapy, through work on a personal story, within our own personality and family history, and integrated as philosophy rather than as a set of skills; as a metaphor rather than a theory of truth. However, asking questions instead of accepting established truths may make integration difficult in a traditional theological setting. There are many theologies, beliefs and spiritualities that may
assist integration and it may be important for Christian settings to establish the priority of Christian truth that the ultimate narrative is the God narrative.

Each person actively constructs and creates his or her world and reality and has responsibility for how he or she authors and stories his or her life. Use of stories depends on the client - personal, life, Scripture, imagery and significant others. It is important to give people enough space for them to make their own stories. Narrative therapy is a precious space where people tell stories that establish a circle of safety where stories may thicken. It is an ethical way of work where language is more than words. It may develop from a one-to-one encounter to social action. Narrative therapy is a lifestyle.

To apply narrative practices is to be curious, to explore what people think and help people pan for the gold. It is a slow process where the narrative practitioner waits for people’s permission to enter their stories. Stories of a person’s pain, suffering and despair are separated from the persons, and persons are praised as a precious gift to others. Stories that make a difference are amplified and connected to the future story, and responsibility for the meaning is challenged and negotiated while helping people to unpack their stories. A narrative practitioner’s role is to hold the hope for others till they’re ready to hold it for themselves.

Language as a metaphor of narrative is a way of translating Christian faith into postmodern language. Similarly, there is an integrative dimension ready to be discovered between Narrative therapy and Christianity that can demonstrate a healing power, sense of release and opening up of hope and meaning. The aim of narrative conversations is not to focus on deficits but rather to bring hope into the conversation.

Narrative values of co-researching, learning from each other, not-knowing and open curiosity fit in very well with Christianity because we all have different faith-expressions within multi-storied and multi-typed Christianity where truth is relative to the people. Narrative ideas and counselling are therefore used in exactly the same way with Christians and non-Christians and there is no need for a specific ‘Christian’ narrative therapy. In a more corporate expression, Narrative conversations may be used in building church community and identity and narrative sermons may enhance church worship services.
The teaching of narrative practices should adapt to the student’s individual needs by embracing diversity in teaching and learning, teaching respect and moving away from labels. Narrative practice students are companions in the search for meaning. Teaching and narrative practicing is a journey made together and brings together faith enthusiasm and narrative in training. Teaching should engage students with ethical transparency, respect, fairness and de-centred language. ‘Space’ as described and defined by participants in this research is the main construct for the training, education and formation of future Christian and pastoral carers and counsellors.

‘Pastoral’ always aims to care, ‘medical’ strongly focuses on cure (often with a care component of course). However, to be able to cure, one needs a sickness. Narrative practices offer an alternative way out of the “psychopathologization” of human experiences as well as offering a uniting way for both caring and professional/medical practice. If it is true that psychotherapies mainly develop new languages and Christian care and counselling practices just adopts them, then the integration of narrative practices may help reduce the language acceleration effect in relation to ‘normative’ knowledge about human mental health issues. They may also support languaging people’s experiences according to their particular contexts and local knowledges.

Integration between narrative practices and Christian and pastoral care and counselling should not be sought in the field of dogmatic and fundamental theology because they operate in different dimensions of human experience. The ‘desk’ theologian and practical theologian may have very different stories about the same person and hopefully some common ground. People’s experiences and the way they language it are dimensional. The truths in one dimension may not be truth in the other. Also people’s theologies are dimensional.

All church traditions are crosslinked with narratives about exemplary believers, saints and witnesses that serve both as a model and inspiration in forming meaning for all who follow. The Bible, especially the Gospels, is mainly in a narrative form. There is nothing new about the importance of a story for Christians, it seems, and narrative practices therefore make a natural fit that require more a sensitive ‘translation’ into postmodern language. Within the Christian
experience we already have stories ‘told’ without using words, as in the case of icons, music, symbols, robes, rituals and liturgies. However this needs proper translation into contemporary times. We live within a time of language acceleration effect and may want to develop more awareness about its influence on all areas of our lives if we want our helping services and our theologies to be of better service for particular persons and communities.

Narrative conversations should focus on identities rather than selves. Narrative selves are constantly formed anew according to various elements, and audience is one of them. Clinically treating selves is only an expert’s construct where the self is treated rather than the person. There are identities, plural, rather than one identity within each individual. Additionally, when more than one ‘therapist’ is involved in conversation or when there is a community it makes a much more fruitful context for ‘treatment’ than individual encounters. If conversations emerge about identities that are formed only in group and social contexts we have a better chance to be of help to individuals who are already working on those identities in the setting of its construction.

Finally, the ‘other’ in life or therapy may never be ‘equal’ without applying multi-storiedness and dimensionality. Given that the pastoral context and narrative practices share many commonalities, re-presenting is present in all relationships and may be especially significant in Christian and pastoral care and counselling, and each context, both scientific and religious, has or is developing its own grand metanarratives – theories of everything.

A final, personal note
In the methodology chapter I shared three personal stories to illustrate my motivation for this research, both as a Christian and as a pastoral carer and counsellor. These stories focused on three personal questions, practical and theological, behind this research:
1. How can we create space in Christian and pastoral care and counselling for non psycho-pathologising descriptions of human experiences?
2. How can we integrate the experience of two thousand years of Christianity in Christian and pastoral care and counselling within a postmodern environment?
3. How can we teach postmodern ideas and knowledges in a non-invasive and non-colonising way to Christian communities?\(^{287}\)

From these interests I formed research questions on the use of narrative practices in Christian and pastoral care and counselling contexts. I hypothesised that narrative therapy ideas:

- are in many aspects compatible with Christian beliefs and values;
- may serve as an enriching concept for the field of Christian and pastoral counselling;
- and may serve as a valuable addition or even a fundamental element for the training, education and formation of Christian and pastoral counsellors.

I therefore offer the following:

I. Narrative practices are compatible in many aspects with Christian beliefs, values, spirituality and theology especially contextual, feminist, relational, metaphorical, liberation, public, local, regional and little theologies. Aspects of apophatic theology also provide useful concepts for a Christian dialogue with the postmodern world.

II. Narrative ideas and practices are found by this research to offer a respectful and culturally sensitive approach that is appreciative of the multi-storied nature of human experiences. As such they may serve as an enriching concept for the field of Christian and pastoral care and counselling that is open for challenging conversation about its past, present and future ways of practice.

III. Narrative ideas and practices provide a valuable addition, or may even serve as a foundational element, for the training, education and formation of future Christian and pastoral carers and counsellors. Essentially they explore the most immediate and current knowledges about the human person and they also offer an effective and yet professionally sound alternative to dominant knowledges about so-called mental health issues. According to recent cognitions these dominant knowledges may sometimes compromise personal and communal wellbeing.

\(^{287}\) Invading and colonising is a two-way street. It may apply from Christians to others but also the other way around.
I suggested at the outset that Joseph Ratzinger’s expression, “the dictatorship of relativism” added a constructivist flavour to his claim. Namely, not only that we are living in it but we are actually “building” that “dictatorship of relativism.” As a member of the Croatian Catholic Church, this phrase was my companion for some time and followed me into this research. However, in exploring relativism I found dimensionality and from one way of saying things (single-storiedness) I found multi-storiedness. Therefore the phenomenon may be interpreted either as “ego” as Ratzinger did, or as personal uniqueness enhanced by a respect for each person’s human subject. It can be viewed as “desires,” to borrow Ratzinger’s word, or equally as a need for each voice to be heard and everyone’s right to dream and aspire towards a more just world. Multi-storiedness can likewise be viewed as a natural human state that reacts to the dictatorship of absoluteness that people of different contexts and cultures may encounter in politics, economics and social roles as well as in religion, especially where westernized influences serve to colonise knowledges. In Foucault’s analysis of power-knowledge structures and their influence throughout history on topics such as sexuality and mental health, we witness the effects of such a dictatorship of absoluteness. The nature of power seeks to remain coherent and inhibits the layering of meaning to various parts. Yet it seems that time and again, in the case of humans, we have to learn the hard way through wars, revolutions and riots that ‘parts’ want to share power in equality because they constitute that power independently of its structural outcome. If relativism is a danger or threat can multi-storiedness be one of the elements of a possible solution? For me it is. Additionally, multi-storiedness seems to bring a richness of opportunity for all Christian traditions to share their experiences and also work towards fulfilling Jesus’ prayer to the Father for us all to become one. Multi-storiedness invites the stories of all others to be voiced. Who knows? Perhaps Jesus prayed for their unity with the Father too.

288 As a reminder: “Today, having a clear faith based on the Creed of the Church is often labelled as fundamentalism, whereas relativism, that is, letting oneself be ‘tossed here and there, carried about by every wind of doctrine,’ seems the only attitude that can cope with modern times. We are building a dictatorship of relativism that does not recognize anything as definitive and whose ultimate goal consists solely of one’s own ego and desires.” See Cappella Papale, Mass “Pro Eligendo Romano Pontifice,” Homily of his Eminence Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, Dean of the College of Cardinals, Vatican Basilica, Monday 18 April 2005, accessed March 02, 2014, http://www.vatican.va/gpII/documents/homily-pro-eligendo-pontifice_20050418_en.html.
RESOURCES

Books


Ware, Bishop Kallistos. *The Orthodox Way*. Crestwood: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1995.


**Book published electronically**


**Book part**


**Additional (mainly) narrative therapy books used as background ideas but not quoted in the thesis as book or book part:**


* This book is not particularly a narrative therapy title yet shares many basic ideas with it.

** Contains parts about narrative therapy.

**Articles in a print journal**


**Online articles**


Article in an online journal


Papers presented at a meeting or conference


Unpublished thesis or dissertation


Script – Training material


Cramer, Saviona and David Newman. “Narrative Therapy Level One Intensive, Melbourne.” Script used at the basic training in narrative therapy at the University of Melbourne, March 10-14, 2014.

Website

https://ahfadtrauma.wordpress.com/training-packages/disaster-areas/narrative-theatre/.


http://actheals.org/ACT/AboutACT.html.

http://biblicalcounselingcoalition.org/.


http://www.biblicalcounselling.org.uk/.

http://www.blueridgebibleconference.org/about/past-speakers/george-scipione/.


http://www.theopedia.com/Prevenient_grace.


http://www.otago.ac.nz/ctpi/what/.


Walter Bera, PhD. Accessed June 29, 2016,  


APPENDICES
Questionnaire for the Christian and pastoral counsellors

This questionnaire is part of a research PhD project at the University of Divinity, Melbourne, (and subject to formal Ethics Clearance) which explores the ways to improve future training, education and formation of Christian pastoral counsellors. Your participation is an important contribution to this enquiry. Submission of this questionnaire is voluntary and anonymous, unless you choose to submit your personal details (name and phone number) at the end of the questionnaire where you are invited to consider further follow up involvement. If you choose not to be involved further, you are not required to submit any personal details and when you submit your completed questionnaire your data will become integrated and aggregated with our data set and your specific data will not be able to be retrieved or removed at a later time. Completing the questionnaire requires 5-10 minutes of your time. Thank you for your participation.

Please put an X or write your text in the shaded space.

12) Gender:
   a) Male
   b) Female

13) Age:
   a) 20 - 30
   b) 30 - 40
   c) 40 - 50
   d) More than 50

14) Occupation – your preferred description:
   a) Christian counsellor
   b) Pastoral counsellor
   c) Other (please specify):
### 15) Years of practice in your field:

- a) Less than 5 years
- b) Between 5 – 10 years
- c) Between 10 – 20 years
- d) More than 20 years

### 16) Are you a member of some professional association of counsellors? (e.g. Christian Counselling Association of Australia (CCAA), Association of Personal Counsellors (APC), Psychotherapy and Counsellors Association of Australia (PACFA), Spiritual Care Australia (SCA) or any other.)

- a) Yes (please specify one or more):
- b) No

### 17) What approaches, methods, techniques or theories of counselling do you use the most in your practice? (Please rate from 1-5, 1= not important to 5= most important. Please use a multiple responses if needed and mark with an X to a related field.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Approach Method</th>
<th>Not important</th>
<th>Important</th>
<th>Neither important nor unimportant</th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>Most important</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Psychodynamic approach (Psychoanalysis)</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Cognitive-Behavioural Therapy</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Rational-emotive behavioural therapy (REBT)</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Person-Centred Therapy (Client-Centred Approach – Rogerian)</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Gestalt Therapy</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Existential Therapy</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Brief Solution-Focused Therapy</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Systemic Family Therapy</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Collaborative Therapy</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Cybernetics of Psychotherapy</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
11 | Narrative Therapy
---|---
12 | Constructivist Psychotherapy
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13 | Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE)
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14 | Biblical Counselling
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15 | Other (please specify):
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16 | Other (please specify):
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17 | Other (please specify):
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18 | Other (please specify):
---|---
19 | Other (please specify):
---|---
20 | Other (please specify):

18) The reason I use these approaches is mainly because: (Multiple responses if needed.)

a) I find them the most helpful and efficient in my practice.

b) They fit the best to me as a person and to my personal style of counselling.

c) They offer me the best way to integrate Christian spirituality, theology and values in the counselling practice.

d) The basic assumptions align with my personal Christian faith.

e) The basic assumptions align with the context of contemporary life today.

f) Other reasons (please specify):

19) What percentage, of a total 100 percent, would you assign to each element in the education of the Christian and pastoral counsellor?

a) Learning about the theories of counselling and psychotherapy:

b) Learning about the practical skills, methods and techniques in counselling:

c) Practicing counselling with other participants:

d) Practicing counselling with outside clients:

e) Other elements (please specify and add percent):
20) Would you require an experience of personal counselling for the participants themselves during their training for Christian and pastoral counsellors?

a) Yes For the minimum of how many counselling sessions? 

b) No 

21) What is the best context for education of Christian and pastoral counsellors?

a) Academic institution (theological college, seminary, university...)

b) Specialised Christian organisation specialised for the practical training (Christian institute...)

c) Church

d) Other (please specify): 

22) Based on your practitioner experience and your commitment for the improvement of the future training models, what are the core elements that should be considered in education of Christian and pastoral counsellors and that are specific to their training and Christian faith in comparison with solely secular models?

23) Any other comments:

13) If you use a narrative approach in your practice we invite you to make a further contribution to this research project, through an interview. We offer you to participate as an interviewee in a semi-structured interviews. The general topics of the interview will focus on your experience in using a narrative approach, the way a narrative approach integrates Christian spirituality, theology and values and what aspects of this approach may be used in education of future Christian and pastoral counsellors. The interview will take a maximum of 45 minutes. You will not need to travel to the interview, I can visit you in your place of employment. If you are willing to take part in this added contribution to the research, please complete the details below so that I can contact you to make an appointment.
Note: Participation in this questionnaire is anonymous and your participation in the interview, according to your choice, can be as well.

For any other remarks, comments or suggestions please contact the researcher on 0422682442 or zoran.vargovic@gmail.com.

Please return the completed questionnaire to: zoran.vargovic@gmail.com
APPENDIX 2

Focus group – questions and structure

The main assignments in training – Dulwich Model:

- **Read** articles
- **Write** reflections
- Tapes of participant’s *work*
- Written and oral *presentations*

(Read – Write – Practice – Present = interpretation ZV)

The main assignments in training – Christian/Pastoral Model:

- **Training** = skills (Maps of Narrative Practice)
- **Education** = information (Postmodern, Social Constructivist, Post-structural ideas)
- **Formation** = personal process of change and integration (Narrative Theology, Theology of Language, Relational Theology, Contextual Theology, Public Theology, Apophatic Theology)

The key question for the focus group:

**How** in your opinion and experience, and in your setting, should narrative practices be taught?

7) What would be the key learning goals in training, education and formation of Christian and pastoral carers and counsellors?

**Read** – books and articles – (About: Training – Education – Formation)

8) What would be, from the point of your experience, recommended readings for Christian and pastoral carers/counsellors in relation to, if you agree with that ascertainment, postmodern context of today’s Christianity?

**Write** reflections, papers, essays, “case studies”… (For: Training – Education – Formation)

9) What kind of writing assignments would you give to students?
10) When? (At the beginning of the course, in the middle, at the end?)
11) How extensive?

Records of working *practice* (Within contexts of: Training – Education – Formation)

12) What would be your recommendations for Christian and pastoral care and counselling students regarding student’s practical work in their own context?

Student’s *presentations* (Integrated experience of: Training – Education – Formation)

13) What kind of presentations, in your opinion, can help students integrate experiences of reading, writing and practice in a reflective and relational way to their Christian values, spirituality and theology (individual- as a person, traditional-their faith community, and contextual-their general and contemporary living environment)?