

**VAN DER MERWE, L**

**COMING OUT OF THE PANTRY:**

**CO-CONSTRUCTING WOMEN'S STORIES**

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**Coming out of the pantry:  
co-constructing women's stories**

**By**

**Lieuwkje van der Merwe**

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**Supervisor:**

**Prof. V. Roos**

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“The woman’s folly is loud; she is undisciplined and without knowledge. She sits at the door of her house, on a seat on the highest point of the city, calling out to those who pass by, who go straight on their way. ‘Let all who are simple come in here!’ she says to those who lack judgement. **‘Stolen water is sweet; food eaten in secret is delicious!’** But little do they know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depth of the grave.”

**(Proverbs 9:13 - 18)**

## DEDICATION

to



## A chorus of excessive food stories

\*René Toohy (artist living in Oslo Beach, SA – Tel: 082 365 7948) painted this picture especially for this thesis. The painting is entitled: "Fat Ladies".

## LETTER OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Dear supporters

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With many thanks

Lieuwkje

## LETTER OF AN ABSTRACT

Dear reader

The study sought to discover various meanings with regards to women's relationships with food in excess. Within a post-modern, social constructionist and narrative therapeutic framework; a narrative inquiry was adopted in order to attain this goal as this is an attempt at the direct description of experience within context and without any consideration for its origins or causes. Within a qualitative framework, the unstructured interview viewed as therapeutic conversations; reflexive diary of researcher-participant and series of drawings were adopted as the methods of choice in order to gather the stories of the participants and research-participant with respect to interpretations of the meaning of described phenomena. The sample comprised five participants and researcher-participant who were all Afrikaans speaking, Christian, female, married with one or two children, ranging in age from 30 to 40. In addition, all subjects at the outset of the study had a bodyweight as defined as obese ( $\geq 45\text{kg}$ ) according to the medical model. They are also within a career setting. On analysis of the data with content analysis as method, several main discoveries were identified including: discourses were described within psychological, environmental and developmental framework, whereas the alternative stories were described primarily within a psychological framework. Furthermore, the psychological aspects of obesity in existing literature comprise mainly self-esteem issues, psychological disturbance, intrapsychic- and interpersonal factors. This study's alternative stories highlighted psychological functioning within the narrative therapeutic context, whereas the implication is that the narrative therapeutic input in this study created more avenues to study psychological functioning of the obese at grass roots level. Therefore, the psychological functioning moved from discourses to alternative stories as discoveries from destructive internalised voices of control to constructive externalised voices of control owned by participants and researcher-participant. Discoveries by using expressive arts further revealed that self-portraits gave a fuller description of an individual's identity at a certain point in time during and after therapy. Co-constructed drawings at the end of the therapeutic process served as reflection upon the process by all parties involved and brought closure to the research process with each individual. Furthermore, these various expressive drawings could be used as examples of narrative documents in future research and as a validation tool for participant's decisions in living preferred narratives as discoveries in this thesis and in their future life. Upon reflection, this thesis reveals an immensely practical application of the post-modern, social constructionist and specifically the narrative therapeutic approach to psychology. This study mainly contributed in two areas: the psychological dimension of alternative stories and the contribution of drawings in the

qualitative paradigm. In conclusion, the discoveries of this study highlight the necessity for future studies, focussing on psychological functioning, being helpful in deriving fuller and richer descriptions and refining theoretical grounding in ever-growing new fields of research.

Greetings

Co-author and researcher

**Key words as postscript:**

Post-modern thinking, social constructionism and narrative ways of thinking

Narrative therapy and narrative inquiry

Discourse and alternative story

Psychological, environmental and developmental dimensions of human functioning

Qualitative research methods and reflexivity

Obesity and eating disorders

## OPSOMMENDE BRIEF

Liewe leser

Hierdie studie het ten doel om verskeie betekenis, in verband met vrouens se verhoudings met kos in oormaat, te ontdek. 'n Narratiewe ondersoek is binne 'n post-moderne, sosiaal-konstruksionistiese en narratiewe terapeutiese raamwerk onderneem. Hierdie studie is 'n beskrywing van belewenisse sonder om die oorsprong of oorsake daarvan in aanmerking te neem. Binne 'n kwalitatiewe navorsingsraamwerk, is deurtastende ongestruktureerde onderhoude in die vorm van terapeutiese gesprekke, 'n reflektiewe dagboek van die navorser-deelnemer en 'n reeks tekeninge gebruik om interpretasies van die betekenis van genoemde verskynsel van deelnemers te bekom. Die steekproef het bestaan uit vyf deelnemers en die navorser-deelnemer. Dié deelnemers is Afrikaans-sprekend, Christen, vroulik, getroud met een of twee kinders en het gewissel tussen die ouderdom van 30 tot 40. Aan die begin van die studie het al die deelnemers 'n liggaamsgewig gehad van ( $\geq 45$  kg) oorgewig volgens die mediese model, daarbenewens was almal ook beroepsgerig. Tydens die analise van die data, deur middel van inhouds-analise, is verskeie ontdekkings geïdentifiseer, wat die volgende insluit: diskoerse wat beskryf is binne sielkundige, omgewings- en ontwikkelingsdimensies. Alternatiewe stories as ontdekkings is hoofsaaklik beskryf in terme van sielkundige funksionering van oorgewig vroue. Van verdere belang is dat die sielkundige aspekte van obesiteit in bestaande literatuur basies uit selfbeeld, psigologiese verstuurings, intra-psigiese en interpersoonlike faktore bestaan. Hierdie studie se alternatiewe stories het die sielkundige funksionering binne die narratiewe terapeutiese konteks uitgelig. Die implikasie hiervan is dat die narratiewe terapeutiese inset in hierdie studie meer geleentheid skep om die sielkundige funksionering van oorgewig persone op 'n primêre vlak van interpretasie te ondersoek. Die spesifieke fokus is op die deelnemers se sielkundige funksionering waar diskoerse na alternatiewe stories en 'n destruktiewe, geïnternaliseerde stemme van beheer na konstruktiewe, ge-eksternaliseerde stemme van beheer verskuif. Ontdekkings in die gebruik van tekeninge het verder onthul dat self-portrette 'n duideliker beskrywing van 'n individu se identiteit gedurende en na terapeutiese ingrepe weergee. Ko-gekonstrueerde tekeninge aan die einde van die terapeutiese proses dien as 'n reflektiewe nadenking oor die proses deur alle partye en was van hulp met die terminering van die terapeutiese proses met elke individu. Verder kan die verskeie tekeninge gebruik word as voorbeelde van narratiewe dokumente in toekomstige navorsing en ook as 'n bevestiging vir die deelnemers se verkose narratiewe ontdekkings gedurende hierdie studie en in hul toekoms. In reflektiewe nadenking, onthul hierdie studie dat die post-moderne, sosiaal-konstruksionistiese en spesifiek die narratiewe terapeutiese benadering tot sielkunde uiters prakties



toepaslik is. Hierdie studie lewer hoofsaaklik in twee areas bydraes, naamlik: die sielkundige dimensie van alternatiewe stories en die bydrae van tekeninge in die kwalitatiewe paradigma. Ter afsluiting, die ontdekkings van hierdie studie beklemtoon die noodsaaklikheid van verdere navorsing wat fokus spesifiek op sielkundige funksionering van oorgewig vroue. Dit sal dan juis lei tot 'n deegliker en meer omvattende beskrywing van teoretiese begrondingstellings wat weer nuwe navorsingsterreine ontsluit.

Groete

Mede-outeur en navorser

**Sleutelwoorde as naskrif:**

Post-moderne paradigma, sosiale konstruksionisme en narratiewe denkwyses

Narratiewe terapie en narratiewe ondersoek

Diskoers en alternatiewe storie

Sielkundige-, omgewings- en ontwikkelingsdimensies van menslike funksionering

Kwalitatiewe navorsingsmetodes en refleksiwiteit

Obesiteit en eetversteurings

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