THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF COUNSELLOR IDENTITY IN A SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

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SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

PhD (PSYCHOLOGY)

IN THE FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

PROMOTOR: PROF V ROOS

SUBMITTED: OCTOBER 2004

Don't seek the whole

Negotiate identity

Shuffle fragments

Cut and paste

Be *ad hoc*

Lose the centre

Stop making sense

Play with the pieces

Tell lots of small stories

Let stories do their thing

Get along with each of your selves

Pursue multiple narratives that neither explain nor unify

Boyd, A. (1999)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

During the past ten years the changing sociopolitical context in South Africa challenged mental health services to re-position themselves in order to stay relevant to specific contextual demands. The field of psychology has also been introduced to the application of postmodern principles in counselling and training practices internationally and nationally, which promised exciting alternative avenues for many practitioners and clients.

In reading the literature on the possible opportunities of applying postmodern principles to psychological and educational practices, it became clear that the relationship between counsellors/clients and trainers/students can be a collaborative co-construction of knowledge production. Existing literature on current training practices however reflects a fragmented picture, in which the orientation, content and pedagogy are not consistently aligned with an epistemology and practice. Postmodern literature on the notion of "identity/self" as the narration of a multilevelled construct is used to conceptualise training contexts as contexts that provide students with certain narratives with which they can construct their counsellor identities.

The aim of the research is to story the construction of counsellor identity through the application of narrative therapy within a learning model. Text production was imbedded in a referential research context which is defined as a context of the following relational positionings: narrative counsellor, trainer, researcher, students and participants. The contribution of this context towards the construction of counsellor identity is explored through engaging in and narrative analysis of written conversations, journals and visual projects of students who engaged in a training context. Through the narrative analysis process, temporal dimension story grids were developed for the written conversations and training journals and the visual projects were analysed according to denotational and higher signification inventories.

Narratives that were co-created in the training context include that of uncertainty, self-awareness, growth, change, hope and respect for individual life narratives, which also contributed to the process of the construction of counsellor identity. These are all familiar narratives that exist in the South African context as we live in a country that is in a continuous process of change and where certainty is an elusive concept.

On the basis of the narrative themes that emerged, guidelines were developed for creating training contexts that could facilitate the construction of a counsellor identity that is of relevance within the changing South African context. These guidelines include a repositioning in the trainer/student relationship; using externalising language practices to facilitate the co-construction of knowledge through a critical engagement with the learning material and a conceptualisation of evaluation as a process based activity rather than an outcome based activity.

Key Terms

Social constructionism in psychology; postmodern educational practices, narrative therapy; training of counsellors; identity construction; counsellor identity; referential research context; narrative analysis, analysis of visual material; collaborative knowledge production; process-based evaluation.

CHAPTER 1

THE PRE-CONCERT TALK

This research report will be presented in the form of a musical programme that consists of a pre-concert talk, three duets and a conclusion. The pre-concert talk serves as a listening guide to the audience. The use of a composition for the genre of representation was influenced by the fact that my academic career includes training both as a professional musician and as a counselling psychologist and therefore brings together two important themes in the construction of my own identity – that of music and psychology. Composition can be defined as an activity as well as the result of that activity, and is not an exclusively musical term. Applications to prose, poetry, painting, architecture and a variety of other media are common and in all cases it describes a process of construction, a creative putting together, a working out and carrying through of an initial conception or inspiration (Arnold, 1983).

The style of this research report is also in line with a qualitative research culture that thinks about the reporting of research as inclusive of elements from other genres, such as self-narratives, fiction, and performance texts (Alvermann, Moon, & Hagood, 1998). Van Schalkwyk's (2002) article on music as metaphor for thesis writing expresses some of my own experiences during the process of thesis writing. She states that the challenge many qualitative researchers face is to find a framework that represents the end product in such a way that it coherently reflects the paradigmatic and theoretical perspectives of the project. The inclusion of relevant aspects of my own history is an attempt to clarify the process of decision making surrounding ontological and epistemological issues.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) also state that sometimes researchers need to "be prepared to follow their nose and, after the fact, reconstruct their narrative of inquiry" (p.12). I had to rework my own research narrative continuously and my understanding of the process of composition made it possible for me to see that music and life are closely related to each other, that narratives about life experiences are like unique melodic themes. These themes can be weaved together in new compositions –

into new listening experiences that will inevitably change the composer as well as the listener. This process is also described by Brearly (2000) as she says that the invitation to engage with research represented in creative form is an act of co-creation rather than one of encountering given meanings. I therefore decided to use the duet as the composition form as it is the result of the combination of two melodies that are *equally* important, where the unique combination of the two melodies played together results in a new listening experience which would not have been possible had the one melody dominated the other, or if it had been played on its own (Arnold, 1983). The two melodies which will be used to compose the duet are, respectively, the melody of academic literature and the melody of participants' stories. My own reflections will be included in the duet as well as in a "writing story" at the end of every chapter.

The pre-concert talk is given in two parts. The first part is concerned with the introduction of the researcher as composer to the audience. It also places the composition of the duets in a certain social context and comments on the style, namely social constructionism, in which the duets were composed. The number of duets that were eventually composed was informed by the structure of the melodic themes that were embedded in literature and the participants' narratives. The consequences of choosing to work in this style in terms of methodology and theory will also be discussed.

In this research text, the terms *researcher* and *trainer* as well as *participants* and *students* are used to refer to the different positioning of people involved in this research. In the text on the research process, the terms *researcher* and *participant(s)* are used, while the texts on the training of counsellors contain the terms *trainer* and *student(s)*. In existing literature on the training of psychologists and counsellors, the terms *students* and *trainees* are often used interchangeably and less frequently. *Trainees* are referred to as a specific group of students participating in a counselling training programme. *Trainers, educators* and *supervisors* are also sometimes used as synonyms in the context of counselling training programmes, although the use of the word *educator* is less frequent. S*upervisor* seems to be used in more specific situations, such as the therapeutic supervision of practical work. The use of the terms *trainer* and *student(s)* is therefore motivated by the fact that training is the term that is most widely used in the literature on the educational process of counsellors and psychologists.

The second part of the pre-concert talk concerns the actual research process and gives the audience a detailed outline on the purpose of the research project. This section also comments on data management in terms of text production and analysis. Dividing the pre-concert talk into two parts is an attempt on my side to include the construction process as well as the constructed product in the research report, because I think that it is in the ever-continuing relationship between product and process that the heart of social constructionist studies lies.

Your Guide to Listening (Part I)

The Researcher as Composer

Academic and Training Background

I studied psychology at the University of Pretoria from 1991-1997. Prior to this, I had completed my performing arts degree in music and was interested in pursuing a career in music therapy. I therefore started with the psychology undergraduate programme, the content of which was informed by traditional and chiefly modern philosophies of psychology.

During my postgraduate training I was introduced to the work of Hoffman (1981, 1985), Andersen (1995) and Anderson (1994, 1997) that made it possible for me to see that language created meaning, and that meaning was a collaborative and public project between client and therapist. I was also invited to read Foucault's (1967, 1972) work on the status of truth and the challenge of single realities as well as the power that lies in the specific use and ownership of language practices. Through reading the work of Gergen (1991, 1994, 2001a), language in a societal context and its possibilities of constructing the self became an area of interest to me. In the field of therapeutic psychology, narrative therapy (White & Epston, 1990) interested me because it was congruent with the constructional view of language practices. The emphasis on processes between the individual and the social context, on the social nature of knowledge and on meaning-making-in-context further facilitated my move away from individually-based explanations of behaviour to a contextual and interrelational understanding of the meaning(s) people create through their lived experience.

A year after completing my postgraduate studies, I successfully applied for a lecturing position at the University of Pretoria. I was involved in the training of postgraduate counselling psychology students. Their practical training focused on introducing them to social constructionist theory and developing narrative therapy skills. By then I had received formal training as a narrative therapist and had started thinking about the process of training and how this related to the person of the therapist that we were working with. When I started with the current study, I had been involved with the postgraduate training of therapists for 3 years.

Composing in a South African Context – The Changing Role of the Psychological Service Providers in South Africa

My own theoretical journey paralleled a similar process that was taking place in South Africa. The worldwide paradigm shift in many disciplines from modern to postmodern, as well as the sociopolitical and cultural changes in our country, required practices within the field of the health professions to reflect these changes (Doan, 1997). The traditional psychology discourse in South Africa was challenged to include ordinary, other-than-Western discourses of illness (Seedat, 1997). This particularly refers to Western discourses which tend to locate the causes of mental

disorders in the individual, in contrast to African and Asian models which give proportionately greater weight to interdependent somatic processes, supernatural forces and social relations as causative agents (Marsella & White, 1989).

However, research indicates that many South Africans still use traditional biomedical categories and treatments in order to address their psychopathology, but few critically analyse the effects of these traditional approaches on the lived experiences of those using them (Long & Zietkiewicz, 1998). Critical psychology, critical-social psychology and postmodernism as theoretical and therapeutic frameworks are suggested in the literature as being applicable to the South African context as these frameworks allow for multivaried perspectives and give recognition to the contribution of people in social changes (Seedat, Duncan & Lazarus, 2001).

It was not only on a level of theoretical perspectives that changes needed to be made, however. Changes were also necessary in terms of therapeutic and training practices. The new sociocultural context in South Africa created a greater need for mental health interventions on primary and preventative level and this impacted on psychologists' traditional client base as more and more people from previously disadvantaged communities became aware of the mental health services available. As early as the mid-eighties Parker (1986) raised some questions relating to major issues facing the profession of psychology. These included questions around the mental health needs of the vast majority of people falling outside the white population group; an investigation of the relevance of training models to equip psychologists with the necessary skills to offer mental health services to this majority; and lastly, whether these psychologists are accessible to this part of the South African community. These concerns were also raised by Mauer (1987) who indicated almost two decades ago that there is an urgent need for the profession of psychology to initialise reform in order "not to become so trivialised and that it will be judged as a mere oddity by the social historians of a future age" (p.83).

In 1988, Kriegler indicated that psychologists play a very limited role in the delivery of mental health services in South Africa. She observed that most psychologists were white and their clients were white, and the treatment models were based in a Western culture, which is often inappropriate and irrelevant in an African context. She also indicated that individual, in-depth intervention is not efficient any more in dealing with the needs of the broader community and came to the conclusion

that this dilemma renders the profession of psychology invisible outside the boundaries of the middle class white population. Freeman (1992) supports this by indicating that existing mental health care in South Africa has largely been inappropriate and inaccessible for the majority of people, as it is skewed in favour of the white middle class.

This dilemma meant that at the end of the 1990s there were still not enough professionally qualified people in South Africa who could provide therapeutic and counselling services, especially on primary mental health level, This was compounded by the fact that existing services were not accessible to the majority of people in South Africa (Lazarus, 1988; Olivier, 1992; Seedat et al., 2001). One of the reasons for this is that over 90% of registered clinical psychologists in South Africa are white (Pillay & Kramer, 2003) and, because of our history of geographical segregation, are situated in predominantly white suburbs. Geographical barriers are not the only problem, however. With eleven official language groups recognised in South Africa, language barriers further complicate communication between existing service providers and clients. Naude, Heyns and Wessels (2001) describe the status of mental health services in the 1990s as "unavailable, inadequate, inaccessible, unreachable, unaffordable, unacceptable, unequal, poorly funded and un-coordinated with numerous limitations and problems of fragmentation and lack of synchronisation" (p.115).

To be able to position psychology as providing relevant and useful mental health services in South Africa, the possibility and need of a new middle level registration category was therefore already envisioned in 1986, with the aim of developing a training course which focuses on practical community work and where the counsellor is supported by a broad referral network (Schoeman, 1986; Visser, 1986). Dawes (1985) also challenged the trainers of psychologists to align their training practices with the sociopolitical context in South Africa. This position was supported by Kriegler (1988) who states that it would be a pity if the Euro-American model of professional training would inhibit the development of this very important development in psychology in South Africa.

Kriegler (1993) further indicates that training programmes often foster cultural encapsulation, disregard cultural variations and rigidly adhere to some universal notion of the truth which is supported by a technique-orientated definition of the

counselling process. She also recommends that a much larger number of professional workers should be trained to be able to work in rural settings, pointing to the fact that thousands of students attain a Bachelor's degree in psychology yet cannot perform any useful mental health role in communities. Donald (1991) supports this by suggesting that the training of the mental health worker or counsellor should not simply be a truncated version of the professional psychologist, but should specifically focus on community work, therefore rendering the practical skills (and by default the training of practical skills) of the counsellor very important.

Elsewhere in Africa, the same questions were raised by Robson (2002) who asked whether a Westernised approach, based on Rogers' model, would be appropriate for counselling training in a Kenian context. Some answers to this were suggested by Owsusa-Bempah and Howitt (2000) who stated:

> Yet the psychology on offer is at best the indigenous psychology of White Western peoples within highly industrialised nations…..the psychology is of individuals acting with other individuals against a backdrop of society. Personal development and achievement is what gives people their sense of identity, not the welfare of the community (pp.5-6).

Against this background, Pillay and Petersen (1996) indicated that the mid-nineties was a period in the history of South Africa that was characterised by the need to restructure the mental health care system in South Africa. In a study done by Fouche (1996), he indicates that there are proportionately more academics and students who feel positive about the development of a training programme for middle level counsellors than professionals who do not feel positive.

Within this context the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) took a decision to create a new registration category for psychological counsellors. The HPCSA is the regulating body for health professions in South Africa, and registered psychological counsellors are considered as part of the health professions. The HPCSA has, through the process of legitimation (Freedman & Combs, 1996), become an institution in South Africa that informs and enforces the requirements for the training and practice of registered counsellors and psychologists. It was during this time that the Professional Board for Psychology, operating within the structure of the

HPCSA, started a process of drafting a policy document for the professional field of psychology in South Africa.

In the following section, the author will attempt to clarify this process of the development and formalisation of the registration category of registered counsellors in South Africa. Formal documentation such as policies and minutes of meetings were used to construct an account of this. All the documents that are discussed date from 1999 to 2002.

Development and formalisation

In 1999, the Professional Board for Psychology drafted a policy document on the roles, registration/licensing, training and education within the professional field of psychology. This was the result of a two-year process that can be summarised as follows. The two years consisted of six stages, and started in March 1997 with a joint work session between the Professional Board of Psychology and the Extended Executive Committee (Exco) of the Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA) to discuss the key elements of the professional practice framework for the field of psychology. This resulted in a first working paper that outlined the status quo, issues and possible future options with respect to the four key elements of a professional practice framework namely roles, registration, training and education.

During the second stage the working paper was circulated to over 530 stakeholders that included university departments, intern training institutions and non-government organisations such as Life Line. Their responses were incorporated into a second working paper. Stage three consisted of drafting a policy that was based on the discussion of the second working paper during a joint meeting between the Board and PsySSA during July 1997. Seventeen regional workshops, which were part of phase four, were held in October 1997 to which all registered persons were invited to discuss the draft policy. During stage five a final policy document was prepared that was based on the feedback schedules that were completed for every workshop and a finalised policy was submitted to the Professional Board during March 1998. After further extended consultations with universities during 1998, a working group was appointed late in 1998 to operationalise the policy into practice. This working group met during January 1999 and submitted its report to the Professional Board for

approval and generation of regulations for promulgation in order to conclude phase six.

This policy is divided into three sections. Section 1 deals with the current and future context within which the profession of psychology will practise in South Africa; the second section contains criteria for a professional framework for psychology in the future; and the third section proposes a professional framework for psychology in South Africa. The following discussion highlights various aspects in sections 1 and 2 that are relevant to the training of psychologists and counsellors.

Section 1. In this section, the policy acknowledges the requirement to find a balance between international professional standards and the indigenous needs of our developing country, also highlighting the overwhelming demand for professional services in this country that are based on preventative, rehabilitative and curative modes. This demand is overwhelming relative to the current available resources.

Section 2. One of the key elements of the framework concerns the training model that must exist for the respective professional roles. The governing policy of the training model acknowledges that there are two streams of training: academic and professional. The Professional Board only has jurisdiction over the professional training of psychologists and counsellors. It also indicates that it remains the prerogative of academic departments to decide on appropriate training modules that will produce competencies specified for every registration category. For the registration category of counsellor, basic short term supportive counselling is stated as the core competency in terms of counselling skills.

During 1999 the Professional Board sent out a letter stating that as of January 1, 2004, there would be a new category of Registered Counsellors who may practise for their own accounts on successful completion of a minimum four-year BPsych degree and a six-month internship. These conditions were changed in August 2004, and stated that counsellors now had to practise under supervision of a psychologist for at least three years. According to this document, it remained the prerogative of academic departments to decide on appropriate training modules that would produce competencies specified for every registration category.

Taking into account the more formal processes as well as the conversations between professionals and academics involved in the field of training, the following

factors then created a context for the development of a more relevant and appropriate professional practice framework for psychology in South Africa:

- A changed sociopolitical environment that impacted on the education and training of psychologists

- The development of the South African Qualification Association and consequently the increasing formalisation and standardisation of psychological approaches and methodologies

- The desperate need for psychological services in South Africa relative to the current resources and the need to ensure that psychological practices are relevant to the multicultural context of South Africa

- The emergence of a new and redefined statutory training and educational dispensation for South Africa through the implementation of the National Qualification Framework. This framework emphasises national benchmarking, portability of skills, the recognition of prior learning and informally acquired knowledge and skills, multiple entry points within education and training programmes and a modular approach to training and development (G. van Schalkwyk, personal communication, March 14, 2003)

The new registration category had two main aims: **more** counsellors could be delivered after a **shorter** period of study. Translated in the South African context it meant that the exclusivity of psychology in South Africa would be challenged as more counsellors (hopefully more representative of the South African community) could provide interventions in communities that were previously excluded from psychological services.

Within this context, the Department of Psychology at the University of Pretoria, a tertiary institution in South Africa, introduced an undergraduate course that, on successful completion, would enable participants to register as professional counsellors at the Health Professions Council of South Africa. This professional training programme has been offered by the University of Pretoria since 2001 and is titled the Baccalaureus Psychologiae (BPsych degree). With this qualification, participants would be eligible to practice as a counsellor, implementing basic interventions in private and corporate environments or in the civil service. The scope of their practice would be limited to primary and preventative mental health care in a

focused area of application. I will discuss the structure of the B Psych programme in more detail in chapter 3, which considers the training of psychologists.

At the time of the implementations I was a lecturer in the psychology department and was asked to develop a specific year module, Structured Counselling, which would be presented during the fourth year of the BPsych programme. It is a compulsory subject for all fourth-year students in the BPsych programme. The name of the module was given to it by the programme director and was deemed appropriate because of the structured nature of interventions that the students would be able to carry out once they were registered and allowed to work.

Fifty-four students participated in this module in 2002. Five of the students were male and forty-nine were female. Of these, 53 students were white, with one female student of colour. Of these students, 16 were English speaking and 38 spoke Afrikaans. The students' ages ranged from 22 to 53 years, with 44 of the 54 students falling into the 22 to 24 year age range.

The counselling training of these students is of obvious importance in order to meet the purpose of the introduction of a new registration category. The success of this endeavour by the HPCSA depends on whether these counsellors are able to provide short-term counselling interventions in a multicultural society, whilst addressing the specific mental health needs of the people in South Africa.

The specific outcome for the module on structured counselling is that qualifying students will understand and be able to apply the principles on which decisions are made for the performance of formalised, structured and short-term interventions at the primary curative/preventative level, and to design and manage subsystems of intervention programmes and processes. Interventions in this context refer to primary level interventions and models. Examples of this level of intervention include trauma debriefing models, community mental health and primary health care models as well as participatory models (Van Schalkwyk, Kokot-Louw & Pauw, 2002).

Style of Composing

In this section I will introduce and discuss the relevant research practices as they informed the style of the compositions. These research practices are situated in a

qualitative, social constructionist philosophy. Parker (1994) states that social constructionism is one of two foundations of qualitative inquiry that situate research in the social world. The other foundation is realism, which situates research in people, and researchers working from this foundation are committed to describing underlying structures in people. In contrast to this, social constructionism as foundation works on the premise that knowledge is produced interpersonally and intercontextually. In the next section an introduction to social constructionist qualitative inquiry is followed by a discussion on how social constructionist philosophy impacts on the way theory and methodological issues in qualitative inquiry are viewed (Creswell, 1994; Mertens, 1998).

A Qualitative Social Constructionist Inquiry

Research from a qualitative framework makes inquiry in a natural setting possible, in an attempt to make sense of, interpret or create experiences in terms of idiosyncratic meanings that people hold (Creswell, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; McLeod, 2001; Mertens, 1998; Parker, 1994). The emphasis of the research process, including data analysis, is therefore on meaning making **in context** as opposed to the attempt by many quantitative methods to decontextualise data (Gredler, 1996; Parker, 1994).

Qualitative inquiry also allows research processes of an interpretative nature. This interpretative nature implies the acknowledgement of the researcher as part of the research process – and it is therefore important to view the position of the researcher in terms of her relationship to the participants (Flick, 2002; Gergen & Gergen, 1991; Parker, 1994; Steier, 1991). This relationship between the researcher and participants is viewed as contributing to the creation of certain realities (Highlen & Finley, 1996; Punch, 1998), and the researcher attempts to move away from an expert position of neutrality and objectivity, which includes and understanding of the expert position as a position of power, towards a contextual reflection on positioning that considers structures, institutions and historical legacies as contexts where power/knowledge and relationships between the researcher and the participants can be challenged (McKie, 2002). The engagement in reflective practices could then possibly facilitate a collaborative experience for both the researcher and the participants.

Social constructionist philosophy is embedded in a postmodern worldview or basic set of assumptions that will guide this qualitative inquiry. It is a philosophy that developed from the sociology of knowledge (Owen, 1992) that is based on the premise that people's thoughts are linked to their connection to the society they live in – "social existence determines consciousness" (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p.17).

Mertens (1998) also states that if researchers accept the ontological assumption of postmodernism that multiple realities exist within specific time and contexts, then their research methods should reflect this. Two areas of impact will therefore be discussed here: theory and methodological issues.

Theory. Researchers working within a social constructionist inquiry framework question the modernist assumption that research processes should be concerned with external concepts, laws and realties to be discovered, studied and understood (Bannister, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Foucault, 1967). Baudrillard (1986) also states that the acceptance by modernist researchers of an epistemological reality supports this search for pre-existing or non-existing realities, which reflects something of the unchangeability between contexts. This unchangeability between contexts also reflects the modernist notion of the existence of a grand narrative or global reality as anchoring points (Kanpol, 1992; Punch, 1998).

In contrast, social constructionist research requires a shift away from uncovering pre-existing or non-existing realities, to the co-creation of realities where context is acknowledged as a co-creator of reality. Social constructionism as research epistemology therefore holds a view of reality that states that values, knowledge, social institutions *and theory* are products of social interaction and not entities separate from human existence (Gergen, 1985, 2001b). It is also an approach to knowledge that recognises that people's sense of reality changes as their interpretations of their life change (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Miller & Fox, 1999). It is this notion of change and difference which is central to the current debate on social constructionism's questioning of universal theories – placing exactly 'that which is different' as the focus of social constructionist inquiry and thereby highlighting the personal and everyday actions as research text (Kanpol, 1992).

From a social constructionist perspective, one of the most important arguments against the acceptance of the notion of grand narratives is that all knowledge is

conveyed through language and that words are the constituents of artificial language systems (Gergen, 1992, 2001b). This assumption then renders the search for absolute knowledge (read theories) futile, and rejects the thought that a single truth exists (Lyotard, 1984).

There are, however, researchers working within the social constructionist philosophy that accept the notion of specific and local knowledge as a valid construction of meaningful events through developing an anti-theoretical version of knowledge. This is made possible by focusing on the local narrative and acknowledging the possibility of consensus on the meaning of language, together with the idea that the power to create local and relevant theory exists within communities. Social constructionist discourses have therefore made possible new ways of looking at the process of intellectual knowledge production (Kelly, Hickey & Tinning, 2000; Punch, 1998; Usher, Bryant & Johnston, 1997). A non-relativist stance within social constructionist inquiry is therefore possible and requires not only that the subjective experiences of participants should be heard, but also that conditions or discourses that made these subjective experiences possible be explored (Willig, 1999).

It is obvious how this view of theory within a social constructionist philosophy has a profound effect on research practice and involves questioning, searching, clarifying and constantly re-evaluating opinions in the light of new data. Liebrucks (2001) states that it is not the fact "*that* human beings produce theories, but *how* they are produced, that needs to be the focus of a social constructionist research inquiry" (p.367). The view of theory-as-universal-truth could therefore no longer be the concept that validates research findings. Gergen (2001b) states that a postmodern empiricism should replace the theory-as-truth validation to search for meaningful cultural theories with pragmatic value within the communities it is generated in and for. Because of this emphasis on the pragmatic nature of "theory" it is important that other validation activities such as triangulation and crystallisation are employed to create confidence in research findings (Janesick, 2000; Neuman, 2000). These will be discussed in more detail in the section on the research process.

For me, one of the most basic social constructionist research assumptions regarding the nature of theory is that knowledge is not created as an end product of the method of inquiry, but that knowledge is created through researchers' interactions with participants and that researchers must find a way to represent these created

realities while actively acknowledging and making transparent the process of construction employed in the process (Liebrucks, 2001). Schwandt (2000) also states that one of the goals of a social constructionist epistemology is to overcome issues of representation, the issue of how to make transparent the process of putting "real" day-to-day activities in language symbols to re-present those activities to the audience.

Methodological issues. Guba and Lincoln (1989) state that a researcher's view of the world should influence the choice of research methods, adding that if the researcher's world view is one of social constructionism, social constructionist theory should be applied in the consideration of methodological issues.

From a modernist viewpoint, research methodology is the guaranteed way of finding the truth, while research methodology from a social constructionist perspective is viewed as a possible "misleading justificatory" device (Gergen, 1992, p.24). A social constructionist approach however, does not reject all methods, but rather implies openness to alternative ways of knowing and allows all research traditions a right to participate in the generated dialogue within psychology (Gergen, 2001b, Punch, 1998). This shift in paradigm involves a twofold shift in research activity – from detached observer to co-constructor of meaning, and from a one-way style of investigation to a two-way interactive mode (Liebrucks, 2001; Shotter, 1992).

Within a constructionist research study, methodological issues are concerned with constructionist and contextual views of the process through which knowledge/data is produced (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1995; Rosenau, 1992). It further acknowledges that knowledge is produced within relationships through consensual language use and that such knowledge is valid in specific contexts (Liebrucks, 2001; Lyell, 1998; Shotter, 1992). This also implies that the researcher is part of the process of knowledge construction, making it necessary and possible to include the researcher's reflections on the research process as research text (Souza, 2002; Steier, 1991). Social constructionist methodology therefore focuses on processes; it is not the primary intent of research studies to find something, but rather to co-construct something (Kotze, 1994; Lyell, 1998).

The researcher is no longer tasked with holding up a mirror of finite findings and concepts to the world but is challenged to become involved in the reformulation of psychological processes in relational terms, for instance reformulating the self as

being constructed in various relations and contexts. Such a formulation enables individuals to take up various positionings in conversations as opposed to a more modernist formulation of the self that is structured and consistent over time and in various contexts (Gergen, 2001). Reflection on the process of construction is not an external or meta-conversation, but part of the process itself and constitutive of the research process. As such, reflexivity as a research activity is therefore viewed as an important aspect of qualitative inquiry (Bannister, 1994; Flick, 2002; Gergen & Gergen, 1991; Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

Reflexivity as referential. Wilkinson (1988) states that she has originally thought to separate functional and personal reflexivity, where personal reflexivity would refer to reflections on the researcher's own identity, and functional reflexivity would refer to the research topic and the methods that were chosen. However, she now regards these two types of reflexivity as inseparable. Reinharz (1992) also views the functional aspects as an expression of the researcher's personal interests.

Steier (1991) supports this in stating that the researcher is part of this process, and reflexive conversations and self-reflexivity will be part of the research process, including the choice of topic and methodology. Self-reflexivity can therefore be defined as researchers telling their story about researching, the clarification of the participation of the knower in the process of knowing (Krippendorff, 1989).

Ten years after this article by Wilkinson (1988), May (1998) writes about the limitations of only having personal and functional reflexivity in social research. He distinguishes between endogenous reflexivity (which combines personal and functional reflexivity) and referential reflexivity as the interface between the reflexivity of the researcher and that of the participants. He goes on to argue that the focus on endogenous reflexivity has led to and permitted an authoritarian stance of the author/researcher, and that more emphasis should be placed on referential reflexivity in order to highlight the interface between the reflections of the researcher and the reflections of the participants.

In an attempt to describe this referential research context, in the second part of the section on the research process I will attempt to offer a transparent understanding of the ways in which I (and by implication the methods that I choose) might create a facilitative and/or inhibitive context for the participants' stories to be heard.

The research report as representation. Social constructionists are usually opposed to traditional forms of modernist representation where data is decontextualised and interpreted by the researcher. As stated by Mertens (1998), the relevant question in social constructionist research centres around whose voice is represented in the written report or narrative. In this research report representation is viewed as being "both the symbolic and tangible manifestation of meaning participants formulate as well as forms of meaning that result from the researcher's decisions and choice of methodologies" (De Lawter, Sosin & Mabey, 2000, p.5). The research report must therefore manifest the idea of referential reflexivity and continuously attend to whose voice is heard in the tension between researcher, participants and audience (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). The relationship of researcher to participant is therefore central to the creation of field texts and the meaning of the field text is shaped by this relationship.

De Lawter et al. (2000) also state that representation from a social constructionist perspective acknowledges the interactional and conversational quality of the research texts through the research report. From this perspective, representation of narratives will take place on two levels – representation as material evidence of experiences and meanings in the form of data sources, such as the written conversations, training journals and visual projects, as well as the researcher's representation as material evidence of data in the form of a research report. The inclusion of the student's stories through a particular positioning in this text facilitates the possibility of their stories also receiving ac-*knowledge*-ment, in other words receiving the status of knowledge (Gitlin, 1994). A detailed section on the production and collection of data follows in the relevant section.

Every chapter of the research report includes the first and second level of representation, the first being the inclusion of narratives of participants as text and the second being the integration of formal literature text as well as participants' narratives as the research text. This is given in the form of a duet as it allows me to give equal importance to existing literature such as academic texts and documentation, and emerging literature as composed by the participants.

In writing the duet, I attempt to create a listening experience for the audience that will include themes from the literature as well as students' stories. Within a postmodern educational research context, Blake (1996) and Usher and Edwards

(1994) emphasise the importance of the expression of previously silenced voices (such as those of students) which can lead to new practices in classrooms and the facilitation of a learning environment where students might co-construct preferred identities (as counsellors, in this research study). The duet is an attempt to include multiple voices and to deconstruct the notion that only "credible authors" should be included in academic literature. This also links to Slattery's (1997) view that attempts to repress multiple voices of representation in postmodern curriculum research are narrow-minded and irresponsible.

As a further motivation of the decisions on representation that I have made, I wish to emphasise the fact that when training is conceived of as a co-constructive and collaborative attempt to develop knowledge, the activity of research follows the same process. This is because these activities (training and research) both refer to the process through which people construct knowledge in order to act more effectively and in order to understand the basis on which they do so (Souza, 2002). My decisions surrounding the re-presentation of texts were also based on the notion in postmodern research that "the relationship between facts, interpretation and **representation** conveys the conditions under which knowledge is constructed and represented" (Wilson, 1997, p.146). It was therefore important that the presentation of data also adhered to the central notion of this project that knowledge is co-constructed.

I also align myself with the view of Atkinson (2002) and Ball (1990) that states that postmodern researchers within the field of education should focus on generating edifying conversations rather than on generating essential truths. Postmodern curriculum development and research is against the reduction of learning to processes of information transmission. Its central proposition to educational research is that the core concepts of the expertise of the trainer and the student as passive recipient must be challenged (Slattery, 1997).

The Research Process (Part II)

It is important for me to invite the reader into the research process as Bateson (cited in Harries-Jones, 1995) says that it often requires two studies to present one in qualitative research: one is the results or research report – the official study, and the other is the study about the study that shares with the reader the choices that were made regarding the setting, participants and data management. Bonner (2003) also

states that "knowledge that is packaged as a result, without reference to the way procedures and theorising produced that result, is in an alienated relation to that knowledge" (p.5).

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is twofold:

Firstly, it is the purpose of this study is to explore how a narrative analysis of participants' stories provides an understanding of the process of constructing counsellor identity through the application of narrative therapy within a learning model.

Secondly, the purpose of the study is to integrate personal and public narratives in an attempt to come to a different understanding of developing counsellor identity in the South African context.

The narratives that serve as research text will determine the thematic content of the final compositions. This is in accordance with Burr's (1998) view that one of the aims of research from a social constructionist paradigm is not only the discovery of facts, but could also be an investigation of the construction of events and experiences. Clandinin and Connelly (1994) write that

> …this struggle for research voice is captured by the analogy of living on a knife edge as one struggles to express one's own voice in the midst of an inquiry designed to capture the participants' experience and represent their voices, all the while attempting to create a research text that will speak to and reflect upon the audience's voice (p.89).

Creating a Referential Context

To create referential reflexive spaces within research texts implies a move away from an autobiographical reflexive stance to a focus on the researcher-participant relationship as the context for referential reflexivity. Kanpol (1992) also suggests that researchers' ability to reflect might enhance their ability to see certain meanings that would otherwise have been obscured by an inward reflexive gaze. This also relates to Adkins' (2002) argument that reflexivity should be about how a

specific research methodology facilitates participants to be heard and not what it says about the researcher.

In this project, referential reflexivity is of importance as the participants provided me with stories as melodic themes to compose with, therefore highlighting the importance of the relationship between researcher and participant as constructing context. Clandinin and Connelly (1994) also state that it is specifically the ethical dimensions of researcher-participant relationship that are highlighted in narrative inquiry and other personal experience methods.

The discussion focuses on the different positions, and flowing from this, different relationships that I had with the participants in this project. Three positions relevant to this project will be discussed: the position as narrative therapist, as trainer and as researcher. Each of these positions also implies an action of engaging in therapeutic conversations, training and doing research. My discussion attempts to clarify how I perceive the processes in therapy, training and research as being similar and parallel.

Introductory Comment

The reason for using the word *counselling* and not *therapy* in this text is that the research setting is a training programme for counsellors. The successful completion of the BPsych programme leads to the registration as counsellor at the HPCSA and this registration category, as explained in chapter 1, differs from the registration category of psychologist, both in duration of project required, practical work requirements as well as in the practice frameworks that are possible after registration. This relates to Wilkins' (1997) statement that the issue of the difference between counselling and psychotherapy has been the topic of an ongoing debate and usually refers to differences relating to the nature of the work with clients and then, by implication, the training that leads to the qualification.

In the South African context, there is a difference between a psychologist and a counsellor. Therapy usually refers to the therapeutic work engaged in by psychologists, which is characterised by the therapist's (and the client's, in some therapeutic paradigms) freedom to decide on the duration and nature of the intervention. Counselling is used to refer to the activity that counsellors participate in when working with clients. Counselling in the South African context refers to a short-

term (4-6 sessions), solution-based intervention as defined by the guidelines of the HPCSA. Psychotherapy, more often that not, refers to a psychodynamic approach to the therapeutic process (Wilkins, 1997). In order to facilitate easier reading and a consistency of the use of terms, I decided to use the term counselling as it is more appropriate to the research context as well as the practice framework that the students will engage in once they are qualified.

Position 1 – Narrative Counsellor

The counselling field has been influenced in important ways by postmodernism and since 1989, counsellors and therapists globally have been interested in narrative and related approaches to counselling that include the deconstruction of the familiar hierarchical positioning between client and counsellor and the exploration of personal identity as a fluid construct (O'Hanlon, 1994). From the literature, it seems that this re-evaluation and re-interpretation of processes of counselling have been driven by counsellors, therapists and academics – Hevern (1999) reports more than 2000 existing biographical narrative therapy resources. This interest from practitioners and academics has led to the development of new models of counselling that are more congruent with postmodern thought and theory. Narrative counselling is one of the more prominent postmodern developments (Russell, 1987; Terrell & Lyddon, 1996; White & Epston, 1990).

White and Epston (1990), often described as the originators of narrative therapy, state that people make sense of their lives and experiences through stories or narratives about themselves. White (1995) also states that language and how it is used in therapy is important as language has a constitutive effect on experiences and determines how we experience experiences. Language practices can therefore be used as a therapeutic tool and as such narrative therapy aims to avoid language that objectifies or pathologises people (Payne, 2000).

Within the narrative counselling paradigm, language is seen to create realities rather than simply mirroring them. As such, narrative counselling indicates the turn away from the counsellor's task of "discovering meaning" to working on "constructing meaning" through stories. A narrative approach to counselling also highlights the importance of the counselling encounter as being a collaborative effort of creating meaningful stories, narratives and identities in the counselling

conversation, where "meaningfulness" is imbedded in the clients' personal and cultural life context.

The counsellor becomes a co-author. This position is described by Anderson and Goolishian (1992) as "the client is the expert" and the "not-knowing" position. As Freedman and Combs (1996) point out, the not-knowing position does not translate into "I don't know anything", but rather indicates a position of expertise on the process on counselling and not expertise on the content and preferred content of the client's life. Counsellors working from a narrative counselling perspective conceptualise their client's difficulties as being part of stories that either contradict their lived experiences or are no longer meaningful (Lyddon & Schreiner, 2000).

Another important assumption in narrative counselling practices is that clients often see themselves as "being" problems. Through the process of externalising they are able to explore their relationship with the problem (White & Epston, 1990). Narrative counsellors then attempt to help clients both separate from their problems and view their problems as unique personal and social constructions that are open to negotiation and change. A narrative approach to counselling therefore adheres to the notion that counsellors can assist clients in the reconstruction of life narratives that have become too restrictive, offering alternative narratives that are more congruent with current life experiences.

Michael White describes narrative therapy as follows:

…on the idea that lives and the relationships of persons are shaped by: the knowledge and stories that communities of persons negotiate and engage in to give meaning to their experiences and certain practices of self and of relationship that make up ways of life associated with these knowledges and stories. A narrative therapy assists persons to resolve problems by enabling themselves to separate their lives and relationships from those knowledges and stories that they judge to be impoverishing; assisting them to challenge the ways of life that they find subjugating, and encouraging person to re-author their own lives according to alternative and preferred stories of identity, and according to preferred ways of life. Narrative therapy has particular links with Family Therapy and those therapies which have a common ethos of respect for

the client, and an acknowledgment of the importance of context, interaction, and the social construction of meaning

(*http://www.massey.ac.nz/~Alock/virtual/narrativ.htm*).

Narrative counselling has developed its own set of terminologies and specific language that describe the general sequence of its therapeutic processes. In the introductory text (Morgan, 2000) that was prescribed for the BPsych students on narrative counselling, this sequence of narrative counselling is set out as follows:

- Engaging in externalising conversations

- Tracing the history of the problem

- Exploring the effects of the problem on the life context of the client

- Deconstruction of dominant discourses

- Finding unique outcomes and naming an alternative story

- Thickening the alternative story through re-membering conversations

- The use of therapeutic documentation and letters; rituals and celebrations

Position 2 – Trainer

Writing within an educational framework and specifically on the professional development of teachers, Eraut (1994) states that the changing context in higher education settings (which includes the move from modern to postmodern views on knowledge creation and transmission) requires a critical engagement with the role and practice of the trainer in higher education settings. He encourages trainers to explore the knowledge that they have accumulated through impressions and interpretation of experience, but as Moon (1999) suggests, also encourages them to draw in specific theories related to their discipline and topic of interest.

Quinn and Vorster (2004) also state that trainers should be encouraged to explore the ontology and epistemology inherent to their own disciplines, to answer questions about the creation of knowledge and the definition of truth, to decide what the purpose is of higher education, and to think about how their answers to these questions influence their beliefs about training and learning. A critical examination of training practices can then emerge and open up the possibility of changing these practices. Since I am working and training within the field of psychology, with

specific focus on the training of counselling skills, the exploration of my answers to the issues raised by Quinn and Vorster (2004) takes place within the discipline of psychology, with a specific focus on the training of counsellors in the process of narrative counselling and how this influences my beliefs about teaching and learning.

The application of the process of narrative therapy within in a learning model in the structured counselling module therefore deserves mention to allow for examination and reflection. Wendorf (1984) makes the statement that counselling and training are often treated as interchangeable processes because the change and growth that takes place in counselling and in training can be explained via the same theory of change. Cantwell and Holmes (1994) add that

> any successful (counselling) training program must model within the program the same values that the participants will exercise with their clients…. the relationship of teacher to participant should be isomorphic with the relationship of the therapist to the client, otherwise the learning model is inconsistent (p.17).

Bor and Watts (1999) indicate that the theoretical assumptions in a counselling model should be reflected in the process of training and therefore reflect in and influence the students' experience. Richards (2003) also observes that models of training are strongly influenced by the theoretical orientation of specific training courses in counselling skills, as the content and nature of the training is usually informed by the theoretical orientation of the staff members that are involved with the training. Duhl (1983) supports this in saying that each training programme seems to be informed by the trainers' perception and conceptualisation of training as well as the actual implementation thereof.

Narrative Counselling as Learning Model. The general sequence of the narrative counselling process as set out by Morgan (2002), from engaging in externalising conversations, moving towards thickening and strengthening the emerging alternative story, provided a guideline for the structure and the process of the module. On a practical level, the different aspects of the counselling process were used as themes for discussion and practical work for the training sessions. The number of sessions dedicated to themes was not decided on beforehand. I added two introductory sessions to the process, which were used for personal introductions as

well as a general introduction to postmodern and social constructionist thinking (Doan, 1997; Freedman & Combs, 1996; Gergen, 1992). These texts were specifically chosen for a basic introduction and definition of the concepts of postmodernism, social constructionism and the narrative metaphor in psychology while Morgan's (2000) book was selected as an introductory text to the process of narrative counselling.

In the following section I discuss three aspects of the application of the narrative counselling process within in a learning model that informed the training process. These are the position of the trainer; specific language practices and a re-evaluation of evaluative practices.

Positions Within the Relationship of Trainer and Students. In the application of the narrative counselling process, the trainer-position attempts to mirror the counsellor-position, which can be defined as a "not-knowing position" (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992). Traditionally, the role of trainer and psychologist in a higher education context contains far more possibilities for a discourse of power/knowing between students and trainers than for a discourse of equality or collaboration.

As an attempt at deconstructing the discourse of power/knowing, I introduced myself by my first name to the students and encouraged them to use it. I also engaged in conversations with students about what they thought a "psychologist" and "lecturer" should be like. This encouraged the students to look at the discourses surrounding the position "lecturer" and "psychologist" as power/knowledgeable positions and opened up a space where they could re-position themselves in the relationship with me. They commented on the clothes that I wore, on the fact that I looked young and wore alternative jewellery. It was not so much the content that mattered, but the fact that they were now in a position of deciding whether I fit the title or not.

To further deconstruct the power/knowing discourse on a practical level, the students and I engaged in "acts of resistance" (Marshall & Rossman, 1999, p.95) against the discourse of power relationships between trainers and students and researchers and participants. These activities, aimed at deconstruction, link strongly to Flaskas and Humphreys' (1993) Foucauldian understanding of the relational qualities of power. These authors highlight the fact that power can only be seen in everyday

interactions between people and because of this conception, the potential for resistance can only be explored on the local level of everyday practices. These "acts of resistance" included the following:

- I asked the students to name the module according to their experience of it.

- I participated in the role plays as both counsellor and client. Some days I would volunteer to be in the position of client which challenged the idea that trainers were above being vulnerable and had their lives sorted out; and some days I would be the counsellor. My active participation in the role plays, instead of just observing and giving advice from the "third" position as evaluator, contributed to a re-storying of balance in the relationship between me and the students.

- In the beginning of each training session, I had conversations with the students on the process of the module, encouraging them to suggest changes according to their needs, if and when they arise. These suggestions were then implemented in that training session, which facilitated a recursive learning cycle. We would see what worked and what did not work, and used our experience to do things differently in the following training sessions.

Language Practices. Engagement in externalising language practices in the classroom is an essential component in the application of narrative counselling in a learning model. Externalising language practices specifically refers to two components – the concept of deconstructive listening and perceiving people as separate from their problems. Deconstructive listening in the classroom setting invites the active participation of students through "inviting them to relate to their life narratives not as passively received facts, but as actively constructed stories" (Freedman & Combs 1996, p.46). Perceiving other people as separate from the problems supports the practice of deconstructive listening and includes explorations of personal narratives in terms of the history, the impact it has on current life narratives and the limitations and possibilities it holds for the storying of alternative and preferred life narratives.

Externalising and deconstructive language practices in classrooms facilitate a learning environment where students are encouraged to actively construct knowledge that is relevant to their own life narratives and to challenge unexamined "knowledge parcels" or dominant discourses. Learning within this model then becomes an activity

where students actively choose which life events, knowledge and information they want to include in their preferred life narrative. Students are thus not viewed as passive recipients of information.

Rethinking Evaluation. The next challenge within this learning model is to address the need in the higher education training setting for formal evaluation, whilst staying true to the narrative counselling process where the client and not the counsellor is the expert on the preferred outcome. The training institution required three evaluative opportunities in order to comply with the administrative regulations. The outcome for this module as stipulated by the relevant and formal documentation was to equip students with the ability to carry out relevant, basic and structured interventions on a primary and preventative mental health care level in a specified context (Van Schalkwyk et al., 2002). This outcome can also be translated into the question: can students engage in effective counselling conversations within the specifications of their profession, in order for them to be granted the use of the title of registered counsellor? From a traditional modern perspective, "registered counsellor" means having certain skills as defined by the context that one lives and works in, which includes the legislative authorities, the training institutions, theoretical contexts as well as the professional bodies.

The broader social narrative on tertiary education as a process of skills acquisition also means that the university believes that students obtain the relevant skills and knowledge that will enable them to be effective counsellors in the community, and that the social community believes that the university has assessed and validated participants' skills and knowledge (Winslade, Crocket, Monk & Drewery, 2000).

However, if we position the outcome of arriving at a point where students can use the title and by implication take as part of their identity the title and role of "registered counsellor", within the social constructionist philosophy of the learning model, the outcome and its evaluation needs to redefined to include the outcome *as well as* an exploration of the process of getting to the outcome (of forming counsellor identities in relationships). This would more accurately reflect a constructionist understanding of identity (Gergen, 1994). Counselling training at Waikato University in New Zealand also reflected this process (Winslade et al., 2000), where the shifting

of a counsellor education programme opened up the possibilities of viewing counsellor education as a process of storying professional identity.

In the conversations between the students and the trainer, an understanding therefore emerged that the process of evaluation should also be aligned with how we defined the outcome within our learning model. Again we engaged in acts of resistance to facilitate this alignment:

- I had a conversation with the students on the format of all the evaluations, thereby allowing and acknowledging their input as valuable. This was an attempt to acknowledge the students' expertise and ability to make decisions, which has traditionally been part of the responsibility of trainers.

- I did not invigilate when the students were busy writing their stories, but encouraged them to take responsibility for their own behaviour and work.

- I asked the students to evaluate their own stories in terms of a percentage mark, although they then had to reflect on the reasons they thought that their mark was an appropriate evaluation. This was done to encourage students to take responsibility for evaluating their own progress in the learning process.

Position 3: Researcher

As the training process progressed I became interested in the constructing process that we were all busy with – as trainer and as counsellors. At the same time, in my academic career I had to start work on a doctoral dissertation. The decision to explore the work that I was busy in this training module as a context for research was not difficult. It was something that I am passionate about and provided a context that facilitated to a large extent the opportunity to develop a preferred identity as therapist and trainer. I was curious to engage in the analysis of the stories that the students were writing on the process of learning through which they were becoming counsellors. This exploration process could take place within the boundaries of a formalised and recognised research process and since it was not only the first time that this module was offered, but also the first time that we explored alternative ways of training, a narrative in dissertation format had the possibility of stimulating research conversations on the topic of training counsellors in the South African context.

In writing about my position as researcher (amongst other positions), the work of Marshall and Rossman (1999) and Mertens (1998) informed the discussion. From a social constructionist perspective, it is impossible to occupy only the researcher position at any given moment; and therefore as a researcher, I also engaged in the process of continuous construction and re-construction of my identity as therapist and trainer and reflected on this in the written narratives (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Gaining Access. Although I was a lecturer at the Department of Psychology, I was not automatically allowed to be a researcher in the department. Permission from the Head of Department as well as from the Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria was obtained for this study to take place. The participants that were registered for the Structured Counselling module were approached in the beginning of their final year, and we had a conversation regarding this research study that included specifically the process-orientated goal of the research. By discussing the process focus of the research, I wanted to create an understanding that I as researcher had no goals such as arriving at certain truths, but that I was interested in exploring the process of becoming a counsellor through a particular training process. A letter of informed consent was given to them to read and sign if they wished to participate in the research. Participation in this research was voluntary and no negative consequences (such as discrimination against or exclusion of non-participants in terms of participating in role plays and the writing of personal narratives) would ensue if they did not participate. They also had the freedom and choice to withdraw from the research study and still participate in the module. The process of evaluation during the module was identical for both participants and non-participants in order to minimise the creation of a reality that to participate would be advantageous in terms of results. In writing of their stories, pseudonyms were used to protect the participants' identity.

A Personal- Experience-Through-Narrative Research Inquiry

Within the framework of postmodernism and social constructionism, I decided to use narrative inquiry as personal experience method, which is embedded in a social constructionist framework (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994, 2000; Punch, 1998; Riessman, 1993). The practice of narrative inquiry shares the postmodern interest in

language as medium for constructing reality, especially with reference to the construction of what is called "the self" in relation to the social context.

This choice of a narrative approach is supported by Lawler (2002), who states that "if we want to find out how people make identities, make sense of the world and their place in it, ….we will have to attend to the stories they tell" (p.255). Narrative approaches to the study of the self and identity move away from the more modernistic approaches such as humanistic and psychodynamic schools as they place greater emphasis on the interconnectivity between self and social structures (Crossley, 2000). Shotter (1995) also states that social constructionists recognise the constitutive role of social interaction in the construction of personal identity and highlight how people are in a continuing process of becoming through communication. In Shotter and Gergen (1989), he also states that communication must be seen "as a process by which people can, in communication with one another, literally inform one another's being" (p.145).

A narrative inquiry approach also opens up possibilities for exploring multiple meanings within context and moves away from a search for only one interpretation or truth (Callahan & Elliot, 1996). It allows the researcher to move between the subjective experiences of participants (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach & Zilber, 1998; Willig, 1999) and situates these experiences within the relational process of constructing identity. Ricoeur (1991) considers narrative as phenomenon to be a structure through which people make an identity that is bound up in the social world. Narrative inquiry is thus not concerned with what can be observed but is more interested in the issue of interpretation, how people interpret the social world and their place within it (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994). Stories are produced within social and cultural contexts. They are not only produced within the individual, but are created within-a-context. Contexts provide the material from which people can produce their own stories. This view of story construction accords with the social constructionist philosophy that underpins this study.

A narrative inquiry approach also allows students to publicly write about theory, and to connect lived experience with themes that emerge from an analysis of that experience. Personal narrative has provided a venue through which many teachers and students have entered published conversations about teaching (Casey, 1996). Souza (2002) also states that research designs that emphasise dialogical educative

encounters between researcher and students have the ability to assist students and researchers in understanding and changing their situations. Storytelling also serves as a testimony that certain things did happen, regardless of whether those experiences have been verified through other and more formal ways of knowing. Telling stories rooted in one's life can therefore become a way of inserting one's own perspective into professional conversations, especially for people who have been excluded from the process of formal knowledge production. "Data" are then constituted by experience which supports one's point of view (Casey, 1996) and in an increasingly alienating world, "story telling is the way to put shards of experience together, to (re)construct identity, community, and tradition" (p.216).

Narrative is therefore both the quality of experience that will be explored as well as the patterns of inquiry that will be followed (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998). The use of story as phenomenon also offers the possibility of bringing previously silence voices to the attention of educators and policy makers (Hones, 1998). However, to only give stories a "hearing" does not ensure they will be heard. By using a narrative inquiry approach, I wish to add to existing dominant discourses by representing the participants' stories in a way which helps ensure that their importance is recognised.

Production of Texts

May (2002) indicates that researchers working from a qualitative social constructionist framework acknowledge that data is produced and not collected, and that the process of production is fundamentally related to the product. Clandinin and Connelly's (1994) work on personal experience methods as well as Lawler's (2002) generic guidelines on the tasks of researchers using narrativity guide the process of narrative text production and analysis in this study.

These guidelines include that the researcher should provide an interpersonal context that is conducive to the production of stories, as the relationship of the researcher to the participants is central to the production of narratives (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; Lawler, 2002). The specific interpersonal and relational context that was created in this study has been described in the discussion on the referential context above. As mentioned before, the module structure, situated within the context of a higher education setting, required three formal evaluation opportunities. The

participants and I used these opportunities not only to evaluate a certain outcome, but also to story the process of our experiences during the module. These opportunities consisted of (1) participants writing about their experiences of the training process, (2) journal writing, and (3) creating something that would reflect their process of storying professional identity.

Written Stories

After introducing the participants to social constructionist and narrative therapy literature, they used written stories as the structure through which to engage with this theoretical approach on a more personal level. Since we wanted to mirror the principles of narrative therapy in the process of training and research, they decided to apply externalisation in the writing of the stories as this is a central concept in narrative counselling. In using externalisation as a writing style, the participants were able to "externalise" the module and open a relational space (between participants and the module) which could be explored in the writing of the stories. The stories that were produced became a valuable way of documenting research as the researcher views stories from the same perspective as Ballard (1994) – that "stories are as important, relevant, valid, reliable, meaningful and generalisable as any other writing that is referred to as research" (p.22).

The following was the guideline decided upon for the writing of the stories:

Write your story as a student who is participating in this module, Structured Counselling. Give your preferred name to the module (to faciliate externalising) and explore your relationship with the module in your narrative.

Journals

The use of journals for the participants was encouraged throughout the year. Together we decided that they would keep a journal every week for the duration of the 28-week module. The journal entries would focus on their experiences of those specific four hours in class as well as anything that happened in the week that they thought was related to the process and content of the module. Coffey (2002), Hodder (2000) and Richardson (2000) acknowledge the use of diaries and journals that are prepared for personal reasons as research texts that require contextual interpretation. Again the concept of externalisation made it possible for the students to write about

their experiences in a relational and therefore dimensional space, and rendered the stories less concrete and two-dimensional.

Visual Projects

For the third evaluation opportunity, the participants and I decided on an unstructured project where they could create anything (e.g., a written representation, a two- or three-dimensional visual representation or an electronic representation) that would reflect their experiences over the year. This links to the notion in sociology that documentary evidence does not only have to include words, but can also include visual evidence (Harper, 1994).

Harper (1994) and Punch (1998) also state that visual representation is helpful in the process of getting to know ourselves; it allow us to communicate statements to others that could not be done in words. Gallas's (1994) research also shows that children come to school able and disposed to using creative ways of understanding the world (dancing, drawing and singing), as well as talking and writing it. Yet, as they progress through their lives, it is writing that comes to dominate, particularly in situations of formal assessment. It is also important to remember that language is not the only medium through which we make sense of experience. Harste, Woodward and Burke (1984) make a similar plea for the recognition and exploitation of other modes of representation besides the linguistic in our efforts to help participants make sense of their experiences.

The decision by the participants to use visual material as a form of expression therefore augments the language focus in this project. By including visual text, it is possible to see some of the limitations of verbal text to construct knowledge, to contemplate ways of overcoming these and to facilitate thinking about those elements of the social world which cannot be expressed in talk. The participants also reflected on their own visual projects in written format, and these are included in the analysis phase as the participants' own interpretation of their work. These visual projects were digitally photographed and are included as visual data in the text and in the addenda.

Literature

Using the literature as data supports the view that writing about theory is also a way of constructing knowledge in the interaction with written text and not merely

restating existing literature in a different way. Bruffee (1986) indicates that writing is primarily a social act as the language that we use originates in the communities in which we live and work, and as we write, ways of knowing become possible that would not have been there without the act of writing. I explored the broader social circulating stories, also termed public stories in existing literature, regarding this specific research topic that might have informed liberated or restricted participants' narratives (Lawler, 2002).

The sources that I consulted were the formal academic literature, informal and formal documentation on the process of establishing the new registration category and conversations with people involved in the counselling field. These texts were then also seen as melodic themes to be used in the final composition of the duets, together with the stories of the participants. This was done as a review of documents and literature often adds a contextual and historical dimension to personal narratives (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Staying true to the metaphor of a duet as final composition, it is in the interaction between the two melodies, in other words, between the private and public stories, that a new listening experience can emerge.

Analysis of Texts

When looking at the creation of a story about the self (and in this research project, a story about becoming a counsellor) in a postmodern context, it is important to recognise that the tension between postmodernism as a critical position and as individual practice is also visible in identity theory. At the theoretical level there are many analyses available, but on a research level the idea of a unified and coherent self seems to place limits on the possibility of multiple storied selves. It therefore often happens that in the moment of analysis, researchers and participants create rather coherent stories, missing the multiplicity of self-experiences of individuals (Kraus, 2000). Self-stories are therefore created with a unifying function and are therefore not always analysed with regards to the various I-positions of the storyteller. This may eventually result in a return to a theoretical position which seemed to have become obsolete, as postmodernist narrative theory warns against a unified self via too narrow a focus on narrative as a means of coherence construction.

Instead, what is needed is to look for theoretical concepts that open up the space for research that will allow the emergence of multiple selves in context. The

analysis of narratives in this study is therefore informed by the social constructionist stance towards methodology in general, with a sceptical attitude towards procedures that *reduce* data, and with the intention of highlighting the uniqueness and appreciating the unrepeatable (Rosenau, 1992).

The analysis of research texts in this project is also embedded in the linguistic tradition, which views text as an object of analysis (Tesch, 1990). The linguistic tradition includes discourse and narrative analysis as well as performance analysis and formal linguistic analysis. Secondly, it is important that research text should be analysed in terms of narrative and should therefore give attention to the various components that narratives consist of, such as moments of transformation, progress and characters (Lawler, 2002). When working with personal narratives, it was sometimes difficult to go beyond including the unchanged personal narratives of participants, as some of these narratives speak eloquently for themselves. But as Clandinin and Connelly (1994) state, it is the task of the researcher to reconstruct personal stories into research stories – to find and discover new meaning in the interaction between public and existing stories such as the academic literature, official documentation and the personal stories of participants. This discovering process includes looking for patterns, tensions and themes either across or within individual's experience. The search for these elements is created through the researcher's experience, which included certain internal and existential conditions.

Internal Conditions

Voice and Signature. The internal conditions include the researcher's voice and signature. In this study, I attempted to find a balance between the participants' voices through their stories, the stories the academic literature tells as well as my own voice. This balance manifests in the physical space allowed for the representation of the stories in the final composition, which links to Neuman's (2000) idea that the researcher has to provide enough research text to allow readers to construct their own interpretations. The question on signature also required an ongoing reflexive stance towards the ways that I wanted to be present in my own research report. By choosing to work with the duet as form of presentation, I could highlight where the literature and the students' stories share certain themes and where their voices were separate

and different. This enabled me to sign this research report in a unique way, without scribbling all over the participants' stories.

External Conditions

   Inquiry Purposes. It is important to remember that personal experience methods such as this narrative inquiry have as one of their purposes that the research text finds a place in the public discourse. This research study is about facilitating conversations between stakeholders on professional counselling training in the South African context. These stakeholders include government, semi-government and non-governmental organisations. Academia belongs to one of these categories, but is definitely not the exclusive stakeholder in this project.

   Audience. "For whom am I writing?" is certainly an important question to answer. Doctoral studies are often but not exclusively aimed at the examiners who have been appointed to evaluate it. This study also includes three participants' opinions on the research and these are included at the end of every chapter. It is important not merely to write **for** someone, but to reflect on how the choice of an audience influence what an author puts into the study, in other words, whose voices are silenced and whose stories are told.

   In the following section I describe in more detail the process of the search for meaning in research text. According to Marshall and Rossman (1999), text analysis is employed to bring order, structure and interpretation to the volumes of text that are collected. In this particular study, the practice of data analysis intends a search among the texts for the local truth of the participants in this study.

Analysis of Written Narratives and Journals

   Narrative analysis is the guiding framework in the analysis of the research texts in this study, and I am guided here by the work of Clandinin and Connelly (2000) on personal experience methods as well as Richmond's (2002) work on students' lives. Richmond's (2002) work helped me to create story grids that serve as screens through which the narratives of the participants may be explored.

   The story grids situate the participants' stories in a specific **training context** in which the **process** of developing **counsellor identity** took place. More specifically,

the concept of context was explored through the externalising stories that the participants wrote about the module; the process was explored through the journals that were kept for the duration of the module (the process); and the co-constructed product (counsellor identity) was explored through the visual projects that the students made. *Context* allows me as researcher to take into account aspects of the social context that contribute to the constructional process such as the learning environment and learning material. Attending to *process* refers to the "taking apart" of experiences to see how and in what way they contributed to or limited the construction of counsellor identity. The journal entries of the students which cover a longer time period assisted me in "seeing" this process more clearly. *Product* refers to "counsellor identity" that for that moment of construction was captured in a visual product by the students.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) also state that every story is to some extent "an individual and isolated text with its own narrative qualities … and that the set as a whole has the potential to represent a more complete sense of the narrative of the inquiry field" (p.139). Garaway (1996) also writes that if narratives have common elements, researchers may be able to use story grids to allow cross-case comparisons. These would in turn provide possible evidence for the research of the usefulness and trustworthiness of the methodology. However, Letherby (2003) states that it is inevitable that the individual identities of students become diluted through the research process, but that it is not necessary to define students as victims of research because of this.

I analysed the stories in terms of themes within or across individuals' personal experiences within this rubric of context, process and constructing counsellor identity. This grid shapes individual stories and allows me to understand these in relation to the purpose of the study – exploring if and how participants' stories provide an understanding of the process of constructing counsellor identity through a social constructionist process of training, and situating these personal narratives within the context of other public narratives present in the South African context.

Using Richmond's (2002) guidelines, the narrative analysis also allows the illumination of the temporal dimensions of past, present and future within the context of the training module. The use of temporality links strongly to Lawler's (2002) statement that narratives are accounts of experiences that happen over time, which

refers to the transformational aspect of narratives. After the presentation of the story grid, the story of the student is presented in a narrative core which can offer perspective in understanding the training experiences in the module. Richmond (2002) states that a typical narrative framework focuses on the core narrative through describing the setting, summarising the event(s), offering evaluative commentary on conflicts and themes and describing the outcomes of the story or conflict. The analysis therefore moves toward answering the question "what is the point of this story?" while the power of this type of analysis lies in its generalisability (Mishler, 1986).

Analysis of Visual Data

Devine and Heath (1999) state that is possible to treat nonverbal products as text, but constituting visual material as text might miss the point of having visual data augmenting textual data. The analysis of visual data in this project therefore aims to explore the relationship between the projects and the participants who made them. As Emmison and Smith (2000) state, anthropological concerns on visual data have led to a particular consideration of the relationship between objects and their makers. Through conversations between the participants it became clear that they literally wanted to "create" something visually that could express their process of the construction of counsellor identity as informed by the training process and content.

From an anthropological viewpoint, the analysis of the visual data in this study may then make it possible to explore the ways in which the projects reflected something of the makers' narratives on the training process and on their identities as counsellors. The process of analysis of the two- and three-dimensional projects was informed by Penn's (2000) work on semiotic analysis. Semiotic analysis here refers to the first level of signification (denotation), which is the literal meaning of the data, and the second level of connotation, which includes the meanings that occur when the denotational level interacts with dominant cultural discourses. The work of Weber (2003) and Emmison and Smith's (2000) work on three-dimensional visual data also guided the analysing process.

Process of Analysis

In order to illuminate narrative threads, tensions and themes within or across individual's personal experiences, I used an analysis process that correlates with some

of Riessman's (1993) analysis and reading phases and integrates the work of Marshall and Rossman (1999) and Denzin (1989). This process comprised the following steps:

1. Written data:

Read the research texts. I retyped all the handwritten accounts and typed accounts of the participants. An advantage of this was that it familiarised me with the material. Repeated reading through the data also had the advantage of forcing me to become intimately familiar with the data and allowing insights which in turn shaped the analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). I also made notes as I read through the research text, providing accountability (Mertens, 1998) in the analysis process.

2. Visual data:

Create a denotational inventory by identifying the elements in the material by listing the constituents systematically and cataloguing the literal meaning of the material. This meant listing all the text and visual image elements that are present in the project.

Analyse the higher forms of signification. This step consisted of asking questions about the listed elements in the denotational inventory. The following questions suggested by Penn (2000) as well as others generated by Weber (2003) served as a framework to understand the different elements:

- What associations are brought to mind through the element?

- How do the elements relate to each other?

- For whom are the images intended?

- Under what circumstances were they produced with reference to power relationships? These could include whether the images would be evaluated how the evaluation would take place. What about the images would be evaluated – for instance, would they be evaluated as art or form of representation?

- What stories do the images tell?

- What does the image text say about the aim of the research study?

- How do these images create meaning for the participants?

- What is my emotional reaction to these images?

- What are the main texts and the counter texts that are conveyed by the images?

3. Allow themes and statements to reveal themselves. This step in the analysis procedure included reflecting the aim of the study to create the context in which themes and statements that emerged from the data had meaning.

4. Complete the story grid (Richmond, 2002).

5. Staying within a reflexive framework, allow the themes that emerged from the data to shape the aim, methodology and choice of metanarratives of the study. I therefore decided on appropriate literature and documentation that would contextualise the personal narratives of the participants.

6. Discuss data sets. Each data set (written conversations; journals and visual data) is discussed in a separate chapter, situating it in its own context of knowledges and experiences.

7. Compose duet. I used emerging themes and statements from personal and public narratives as melodic themes and composed a duet or duets that consisted of the melodies of the participants and the melodies of relevant literature and other documentation. It is important to remember: "…narratives are being worked and reworked and therefore also reworked through the process of the research itself. In this sense they are co-produced by the researchers and participants" (Lawler, 2002. p.254). I find comfort in Connelly and Clandinin's (1990) statement that "writers and readers of narrative inquiry research text need to muster a certain tolerance for the unease that may accompany ambiguity and the abandonment of what Dewey called *The quest for certainty*" (p.154).

The Trustworthiness of Narrative Analysis (Is This Valid/True Knowledge?)

Narrative analysis as qualitative inquiry in a social constructionist framework cannot be validated against the modernistic and experimental criterion of traditional reliability and validity. It is therefore important to construct and develop guidelines for evaluation that reflect the nature of narrative social constructionist inquiry, highlighting the personal and local experience rather than focusing on the transferability of the outcome of the research. Taking into account the narrative nature of the inquiry, I integrate the work of Guba and Lincoln (1989), Janesick (1994; 2000), Kvale, (1995) and Mertens (1998) with the methods of validating narrative research developed by Riessman (1993).

According to Kvale (1995), the issue of "what is valid knowledge in the social world involves the philosophical question of what is true" (p.2). Communicative validity and pragmatic validity are applied to this question as they serve as frameworks for thinking about the validity of the validity question in social constructionist studies. The following discussion on validating narrative analysis is an attempt to familiarise the listener with the issues surrounding the practice and process of validation as they were considered throughout the research process and therefore formed part of the research narrative.

Validity in qualitative research also concerns descriptions and explanations and whether or not the explanations are believable (Janesick, 2000). This links to the concepts of persuasiveness and plausibility as criteria in narrative analysis that refer to whether the interpretation of the narratives is reasonable and convincing. Persuasiveness enters a research text when theory and participant narratives share certain themes and when researchers/authors have the ability to consider alternative interpretations to their work. This corresponds to a certain extent with the criteria of "width" as described by Lieblich et al. (1998). Width refers to the quality of the interviews, the number of quotes and the suggestions of alternative interpretations. Neuman (2000) also indicates that researchers must provide the reader with enough research text to aid readers in believing and accepting the experiences and interpretation thereof as plausible. Credibility, correspondence, coherence and the pragmatic use of the report are other concepts that relate to the validity of qualitative research. As such, these are discussed briefly below.

Credibility

The credibility of the research refers to whether the researcher has successfully managed to state the parameters of the study, including the setting, population and theoretical framework (Marshall & Rossman, 1999). Credibility in qualitative research can also be enhanced in the following ways to maximise the correspondence between the participants' perceptions of constructs and the researcher's portrayal of their viewpoints (Mertens, 1998).

Prolonged and Substantial Engagement at the Research Site

I spent eight months in the research setting. The length of the training module informed the time spent in the research setting; however, I was also confident that themes in the data were repeating and that no new themes were emerging, which suggests that sufficient time was spent in the field.

Triangulation

Janesick (1994) refers to four basic types of triangulation that include data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theory triangulation and methodological triangulation. In this research project, data triangulation was used in collecting research text from different participants from different stages in the research project. Method triangulation was also employed by collecting research text through multiple methods such as personal narratives, visual material and public documents. Triangulation is used in order to check for consistency of evidence across data. In staying with the social constructionist framework, crystallisation as an evolving concept is also taken into account (Janesick, 2000). Crystallisation refers to the recognition of the many facets of a given approach to the social world, and it incorporates the use of other disciplines (such as art) to inform our research processes and methods. The visual two- and three-dimensional representations of the participants' experiences used in this study can be seen as a different lens or facet of the crystal through which experience is viewed. Journal writing by participants and researchers can also be also viewed as part of the crystallisation process (Janesick, 2000).

Correspondence

Correspondence as a second criterion is a way of enhancing the credibility of research process. Researchers must be willing to share their interpretations with participants and peers as part of the analysis process. In this study, I invited participants to reflect on my interpretations and offer supportive or alternative interpretations. Correspondence also links to the notion of member checks (Guba & Lincoln, 1989), where researchers have to find a way to allow the participants to review the material before finally writing the report.

Coherence

Coherence as a third criterion exists on three levels – global, local and thematic coherence. This has implications for the overall goals of the study, whether I am able to accomplish my initial research "goal", namely, the description of the process of constructing a counsellor identity, while taking into account the way that participants' narratives are written. It is also clear that continuous conversations must take place between these two levels of coherence, since staying true to the participants' stories sometimes involves changing the research story. The third level of coherence, thematic coherence, involves the repeated use of research text on certain themes, highlighting the "grounded nature" of emerging themes and acknowledging the co-constructed nature of the research. My initial goal was to describe the narrative of the training process, but after reading and analysing the personal narratives of the participants, I adjusted the first level of coherence to the description of counsellor identity (Lieblich et al., 1998).

The Pragmatic Use of Research Report

The fourth way of establishing validity refers to the usability of data for participants but also to the extent to which the study could become the basis for further research conversations. The view of knowledge and truth as a created and interrelational entity in communities must be shared by the community of researchers. Lieblich et al. (1998) add that coherence involves the interaction between internal coherence (global, local and thematic) and existing theories. Role players in the academic community and the participants were asked to review and comment on the pragmatic use of the research report in the form of critical reviews.

Conclusion

We have come to the end of the pre-concert talk. What follows now is the three duets. First you will hear the various melodic themes on their own as composed by the producers of public and personal narratives. After this, you will have the opportunity to listen to the duet, where I have attempted to create a different listening experience on the process of the construction of counsellor identity.

CHAPTER 2

POSITIONING IN LEARNING AND COUNSELLING

Stories in the Literature

Introduction

Since this is an academic text that is written within the field of psychology, I thought that I should clarify why educational practices and research on educational practices are relevant to this research project. In my inquiry into the construction process of a training programme for counsellors, I am interested in the content of training programmes as well as the process of training, which includes various factors such as the relational positioning between trainers and students and the process of knowledge construction within this relationship. Educational practices are relevant to the process of training (pedagogy) and psychological practices are relevant to the content of the training programme. The stories that the literature tells about postmodernism and social constructionism in both the educational and psychological domain are therefore written in this section.

In my reading of the literature, it became clear to me that there were few texts available that integrated the content of training programmes within the field of psychology with the process of training from a pedagogical perspective. I therefore decided to reflect this lack of integration in the textual representation of the literature. Firstly, I write about postmodernism and social constructionism in psychology, and thereafter about these aspects in the educational domain. This is a false distinction as many of the aspects overlap, but in the writing of this text I am allowing the content of the literature to inform my process of writing. In the integration of the students' stories and the literature in the duet, I attempt to integrate content and process.

Postmodernism and Social Constructionism

A short introduction to the concepts of postmodernism and social constructionism is given before the application of these terms in the fields of psychology and education will be discussed in more detail.

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My attempt to define postmodernism will probably reflect the attitude found in most of the literature on the subject, which states that a definition is not possible (Foster, 1985; Marshall, 1992; Usher & Edwards, 1994). A definitive attempt would also be incongruent with the nature of the postmodern, which is inherently against a unifying and singular conceptualisation of any concept. There are also important theoretical differences about the origins of postmodernism, but there is at least agreement that it probably has its origins in literature and architecture in the 1960s and 1970s, when the process of recognising the limitations of the modern worldview encouraged a celebration of postmodern multiplicity and deconstruction (Slattery, 1997).

Kvale (1992) points out that the term postmodern is controversial and ambiguous and it is therefore useful to use Featherstone's (1991) distinction between postmodernity as referring to a postmodern age, which suggest something that happened after modernity, postmodernism as referring to the cultural expression of a certain attitude and postmodern thought as referring to the philosophical reflection on a postmodern culture. Ten years later, Atkinson (2002) still acknowledges the problem that multiple interpretations of the term poses and partially relates it to the fact that the proponents of postmodern thought are so resistant to definitions. This is exacerbated by the fact that postmodernism also includes various discourses such as ecosystemic approaches and social constructionism, which both stand against modernism, despite their internal differences.

As an attempt at a description then, at a very basic level, postmodern thought challenges the view of reality as independent from the observer and promotes the idea that language is a constitutive force. Its philosophical activities include the rejection of the existence of a natural subject with inherent and finite characteristics, as well as the questioning of grand or metanarratives or universal explanations of history. In contrast with this, postmodernism acknowledges the impossibility of arriving at a final meaning and celebrates the possibility of difference and multiplicity (Blake, 1996; Slattery, 1997).

Within the parent movement of postmodern thought, the field of psychology has for the past 20 years acknowledged a body of ideas quite different to traditional psychological views. This body of ideas has loosely been called social constructionism (Burr, 1995; Harre, 1989; Shotter, 1992). Raskin (2002) states that no

single author has been given credit for originating social constructionism. It is important to acknowledge that social constructionism is not a unitary paradigm, as both epistemic and ontological forms of social constructionism exist in texts on the application of social constructionism. This project will focus on epistemic social constructionism, which concerns itself with the constructional nature of language and the use of language practices to construct particular stories of what the world is like for us (Edley, 2001).

Within the body of social constructionist ideas, it is also possible to distinguish between three models that each brings a different perspective to the field of application. The first of these models derives from the research on the sociology of knowledge as influenced by Berger and Luckmann's work *The social construction of reality: A treatise on the sociology of knowledge* (1967). This work focuses specifically on the relationship between language and knowledge through questioning the process of establishing and privileging certain knowledge systems as having more status than others. Kuhn's (1962) work on the changing nature of scientific knowledge also added to the evolution of social constructionist thought in this area. The second model is more concerned with the poststructuralist and postmodern perspectives in social psychology, with Gergen's (1985, 1994) work regarded as being influential. The third model embraces more realist perspectives which argue for a coherent and consistent reality that forms the basis of sensory perceptions, even if these perceptions do not reflect a causal relationship between the perceived phenomena (Hruby, 2001). The discussion in this text will be on the perspectives that postmodernism and social constructionist thought brings to this field of inquiry, and is based on the second model in the above distinction as this model affords me the conceptualisation of identity as a social construct.

Postmodernism and Social Constructionism in Psychology

Although social constructionism is the main lens through which I look at processes in this research, I would like to situate it in the context of its parent movement in contemporary culture: postmodernism (Harre, 1997), and specifically its application in psychology. Psychology as a "science" has found itself increasingly at odds with postmodernity as Gergen (1992) points out that in modernity "psychologists could confidently proclaim that there was a subject matter available for

interrogation….in the light of postmodern arguments it is no longer easy to occupy such a position" (p.23). Kvale (1992) supports this by stating that this rejection of a natural subject might also include the questioning and ultimate rejection of the science of psychology as it has existed up to now. Gergen (1992) adds that the problem is not so much the fact that psychology as applied science is situated in a certain understanding of psychology, but that there is a lack of reflection on this understanding.

This apparent lack of reflection is also noted in the vast amount of literature available on the topic of postmodernism – and the relatively few writers within the field of psychological practice that have engaged with postmodern thinking, although this number has increased in the past five years (Loewenthal & Snell, 2003). Most of the literature focuses on the movement away from or against modernistic approaches to psychotherapeutic practices towards an application of a postmodern philosophy in the field of psychotherapy (Elliot & Spezzano, 2000; Howard, 2000; Malson, 1997; Parker, 1999; Timimi, 2002).

Social constructionism as an ontological and epistemological framework is relatively new to the discipline of psychology and has as such enjoyed a mixed reception from academics and students of psychology, perhaps because it challenges some its most cherished assumptions (Raskin, 2002). As such, the relationship between psychology and social constructionism is regarded as controversial and challenging (Gergen, 1985). Social constructionism cannot be regarded as a psychological theory but must rather be seen as a perspective or orientation towards psychological constructs of knowledge, which focuses more on process than product and gives descriptions regarding processes of constructing realities (Gergen 1985; Miller, 2000; Van Niekerk, 1999).

In the next section, I outline the areas of postmodern and social constructionist thought in psychology that I consider relevant to this research. This is therefore not a general discussion, but a focused argument as informed by the (con)texts of this inquiry.

Acknowledging the Constructional Quality of Language Through Narrative and Discourse

Hare-Mustin (1994) defines discourse as "a system of statements, practices and institutional structures that share common values" (p.19), while Parker (1992) defines discourse as coherent systems of meaning. In their definition of discourse, Potter and Wetherell (1987) adhere to the central idea that people use language to construct themselves and come to an understanding of the self and identity. Operating on the same level as discourses, meta or grand narratives are terms used to describe "master theories" that are accepted by institutions to develop and maintain their power positions in particular societies.

I also view discourses or metanarratives as coherent system(s) of meaning that are constructed and understood through certain language practices (Parker, 1992; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). From this perspective grand or metanarratives can become empowering or oppressive frameworks in which certain narratives about self or identity can or cannot be told/narrated/written/created. Metanarratives thus have the ability to shape an individual's choices about which self- and other narratives are storied and which remained unstoried (Doan, 1997; Freedman & Combs, 1996 & Weingarten, 1998).

Narratives that are storied by the individual are usually those narratives that are viewed as significant and meaningful in a person's life. These are sometimes called dominant narratives because of their ability to shape peoples' experiences within their specific meaning framework. Anderson and Goolishian (1988) also state that "meaning and understanding do not exists prior to the utterances of language" (p.378), emphasising the fact that language not only creates experiences, but that meaning and understanding are constructed in conversation. Meaning and language then become inseparable as narratives that are unstoried are usually believed to be insignificant enough that they do not have constitutive or shaping power.

Dominant self-narratives therefore develop in a context of metanarratives in a social world, and in turn inform the individual on what normative or acceptable behaviour is (Drewery & Winslade, 1997). "Normative behaviour" as defined by society then could become a metanarrative in a particular society which sets the limits in which life narratives of individuals can be storied or not. This relates to the concept

of the importance of social processes (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999) which argues for the perspective that the self is constructed through societal processes in which we participate or experience. The focus on the construction of a self-narrative within a certain set of   dominant narratives must, however, also include a focus on the deconstruction or unpacking of these dominant narratives in order to determine the extent to which they have impacted on and contributed to the construction of the person's self (White, 1995).

From the perspective of social constructionism then, people's interpretations of the world, their experiences and personal stories are always guided by shared social discourses (McNamee & Gergen, 1992). Language is generated, sustained and/or rejected through social interactions and create "reality" for those involved in meaning making through language. In this context, it is also possible to see the importance of language in the deconstruction of discourse(s), metanarratives and dominant narratives. Language no longer only represents experience, but is viewed as having constitutive power, in other words, it does not merely serve as symbols for something but continuously creates the very thing that we call experience. Kerka (1997) supports this in stating that perception is interpretative in nature and therefore inseparable from our language frameworks. People are always constructing experiences in interaction and through the languaging of experiences.

Anti-individualism and a Multiversal Human Nature

The challenges that postmodernism and social constructionism hold for the idea of an essential individual self carry far-reaching implications for applied psychology, as the field of psychology has focused traditionally on the internal world of the individual. Within a modernist framework, social psychologists acknowledged that people experience and behave in a social context, but still assumed that behaviour could be explained through the workings of the individual psyche. In contrast with this, there has been much resistance from social constructionist quarters against the idea of essential, universal and generalised qualities of people, and an increased focus on the difference between people, the unique qualities of every individual and the fact that it is not possible to know people without taking into account the context in which they exist (Burr, 1995; Gergen, 1985; Harre, 1989; Owen, 1992).

Following from this, any act derives some of its meaning from the context in which it is produced. Truth exists in the moment of description and can change with a redescription and therefore a recontextualisation. In this context a multiverse of ideas becomes possible and replaces the concept of universal and singular truth structures (Atkinson, 2002). This conceptualisation also makes the idea of plurality possible, which proposes that one perspective on human nature cannot possibly reflect the totality of the self within a social context.

Postmodernism also embraces plurality by viewing the self as made up from various alternative "self-stories" and by acknowledging the fact that it is possible that the self changes as the context changes. Kerka (1997) also reflects on the concept that the self from a postmodern perspective is fluid, changeable and informed by multiple discourses. Social constructionism therefore rejects the view of an individual self only and proposes that the process of understanding and describing human behaviour consists of viewing people as individuals and individuals through communities at the same time (Burr, 1995). The fluidity of the self also highlights the importance of positionality in relationships as people occupy different positions towards each other in continuous moments of meaningful encounter (Harre, 1997).

An Acceptance of the Historical and Cultural Specificity of Truth

From a social constructionist worldview, it is important to explore the meaning that people attach to experiences as these meanings are informed by a cultural as well as a historical context (Freedman & Combs, 1996; Nightingale & Cromby, 1999). People are born within a context that contains certain cultural narratives and make sense through these cultural narratives through the personal narratives they construct in relation to these cultural narratives. Cultural narratives influence us to assign certain meanings to particular life events and to treat others as relatively meaningless (White, 1995). Harre (1989) uses the term *moral order* to refer to metanarratives or discourses in societies that provide people with scripts and roles, with varying degrees of flexibility. We may come to an understanding of specific knowledges in communities only through knowing about the history and culture surrounding narratives which have attained metanarrative status (Rorty, 1979).

The modernist quest for an essential human nature is therefore questionable from a postmodern position as "being human" is not seen as a static position, but

rather as a position that is informed by changing contexts. Gergen (1985) explains that the goal of social constructionism is not to deny the fact that knowledge about human beings exists, but rather to clarify the process of creating knowledge by acknowledging the cultural narratives that participate in and create contexts for knowledge creation. This recalls the distinction between an ontological and epistemological sense of social construction, emphasising the fact that when social constructionists claim that nothing comes into existence except through social processes, they are not making an ontological statement but rather an epistemological one (Edwards, 1997).

This accords with Berger and Luckmann's (1967) description of how ideas and practices obtain reality status in a given social context. These authors highlight the three processes of typification, institutionalisation and legitimisation as contributing to the end result of reification. Reification can be described as an appreciation of products of human activity (such as certain knowledge systems) as if these products were not connected to human beings (Freedman & Combs, 1996). When this process of production and how it contributes to the end result is not examined, end products could easily become metanarratives which limit rather than enable narratives of difference to be written. Social constructionism as a research practice offers the possibility of arriving at narratives that contain different perspectives on meaning to those that metanarratives in society prescribe (Durrheim, 1997).

Questioning the Objective Science of Psychology Through Self-Reflexive Practices

From a modernistic approach, psychology concerns itself with developing scientific methods in order to discover objective facts about the human nature of people that will empower psychologists as scientists to change, control and predict human behaviour. Social constructionists doubt the idea of establishing any essential knowledge about human nature, and assert that those ideas traditionally regarded as facts are simply a description of events in a certain context. Consequently, they treat with suspicion any definitive claims to scientific knowledge (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999).

The existence of an objective world is challenged through the realisation that people always interpret experiences. This makes it difficult to speak of an

object/subject dichotomy. Through this perspective social constructionism also questions the belief that reality is independent of representation yet can be captured by it, and rather acknowledges and explores the politics of representation in an attempt to look for the existence of power structures and how these may impact on what is represented (Alvermann & Hruby, 2000; Gergen 1994). At the heart of this challenge of the existence of an objective world lies the recognition of the self as being reflexive, as this supports the social constructionist questioning of our ability to be objective about the things that we experience and inquire into. The concept of self-reflexivity brings into focus the fact that we always participate and are part of what we create. As Ricoeur (1991) states,

> the subject itself enters into the knowledge of the object; and in turn, the former is determined, in its most subjective character, by the hold which the object has upon it, even before the subject comes to know the object (p.57).

Self-reflexivity enables us to question discursive practices in order to become aware of the structures of emancipation and or oppression within them (May, 1998; Parker, 1994). Parker (1999) states, however, that reflexivity can also lead us into a spiral of passivity through which we become aware of the contributions of the self towards certain painful constructions. It is important that critical reflections of the self rather lead to an exploration of the contexts which made these contributions possible and which limited alternative forms of being.

Self-reflexivity as a phenomenon has further received attention from postmodern quarters. As Skeggs (2002) indicates, it is through the telling of the self that social processes of positioning, which refer to the fluid nature of identity, are put into effect. However, it is also possible to manifest and maintain difference and distinction through the telling of the self. By adopting a self-reflective approach people can become open to a variety of ways of understanding human nature. This in turn leads to a recognition of the value of a specific framework whilst at the same time understanding that "emancipatory messages in any theory can have oppressive consequences when emancipation become a search for certainty and control through definitive knowledge, totalising explanations and the elimination of difference" (Usher & Edwards, 1994, p.31).

From a postmodern framework, the ability to critically self-reflect is therefore essential in our questioning of the discourses and grand narratives which provide the con*texts* within which we con*text*ualise our lives. However, self-reflection entails not only the ability to critically reflect on these texts, but also the ability to recognise our own textual powers in constructing the texts in which we live.

Postmodernism and Social Constructionism in Education

Education, like psychology, does not fit easily into the postmodern movement because the foundation of educational theory and practice is situated in the modernist tradition. Lyotard (1992) argues that education is inextricably intertwined with the project of modernity – the belief that the educational process is capable of realising the potential of students to become autonomous through shaping their identity and making them into all kinds of subjects. *Post*modernism, however, denies the existence of a natural subject with inherent characteristics and potential; and Lovlie (1992) argues that postmodern critique "stabs at the very heart of the most cherished ideals of Western culture of personal autonomy as an educational goal" (p.121).

In 1995, Wells stated that there is a deeply ingrained belief in society that education is mainly about the transmission of pre-existing knowledge and the certification of those who have acquired it. He goes on to say that this view of education and knowledge is constantly contradicted by the fact that almost every day we learn about some area of knowledge where what was true yesterday is now recognised as having been wrong. As an alternative view to the modernist educational perspectives, social constructionism views knowledge and its relationship to learning as something that does not exist outside the interpersonal context of individuals and communities who construct relevant knowledge as it is needed in their day-to-day living (Souza, 2002).

If knowledge is viewed as being in a constant state of transformation, learning then also needs to be recognised as a continuous activity of engaging in inquiry and problem solving with respect to the activities that are of current concern to the communities of which the students are members. Within this perspective, the authority for knowing, teaching and learning also needs to rest with the students rather than only with the trainer (Peterson, 1994). The process of education and training within this context is then not viewed as a process of delivering messages (by the

trainer) and receiving messages (by the students), but as a dynamic process through which students and trainers co-construct meaning and knowledge. Sprague (1992) indicates that dialogues that permit students to use their own voice in making knowledge relevant to them become empowering classroom communication.

In the following section, I explore the usefulness of thinking about educational practices from a postmodern and social constructionist framework, by discussing the metanarratives of progress and knowledge transmission as discourses in modern educational practices (Lyotard, 1992; Simpson, 2000; Stronach & MacLure, 1997). This is followed by a discussion of "the valuing of other knowledge" and "difference" as possible alternative narratives storied in current developments in postmodern educational practices. This discussion is a reflection of the content of academic texts that I engaged with in my reading. I conclude this section by reflecting on the relevance of these themes for this research project.

The Metanarrative of Progress

In his work on the changing condition of knowledge, Lyotard (1984) argues that the metanarrative of progress, which supposes the emancipation of humanity through the development of scientific knowledge, is most closely associated with the project of modernity. Teaching and learning are the main concerns of education within this grand narrative. Within this, a narrative of mastery is etched into the modernist educational discourse. Mastery of a certain body of knowledge is a key educational goal, marked by a completion or ending of a certain process, be it the acquisition of an undergraduate or a postgraduate qualification.

Postmodernism questions this narrative of mastery, enabling a critique of the construction of progress as linear and inevitable, and opens up opportunities for exploring the productiveness of not seeing progress as linear, inevitable and finite, but as a lifelong process (Edwards & Usher, 2001). Britton (1996) also describes the educational goal of emancipation through progress as a subtle form of oppression and regulation of identity, which invites critique from postmodern quarters.

The Metanarrative of Knowledge Transmission

The metanarrative of knowledge transmission strongly links to the modernist conceptualisation of knowledge as a product that exists outside people, in other

words, as an acknowledgment of the possibility of an objective science. In this conceptualisation of knowledge as an encapsulated and to some extent finalised entity, it is possible to think of transmitting this entity to passive recipients (or subjects who learn) in educational practices.

The postmodern movement, however, not only challenges the conception of the existence of a subject who learns, but also challenges the modernist conceptualisation, structures and hierarchies of knowledge (Atkinson, 2002; Lyotard, 1984). The challenge that postmodern thought poses for educational practices resides largely in the questioning it brings to what could be called knowledge. The past decade has seen various viewpoints that note how postmodern approaches to educational research have opened up new spaces in which an examination of the processes of knowledge creation can be explored (Kelly et al., 2000). The epistemological exploration of knowledge then becomes central to the conversation between education and postmodernism, creating tension insofar education as domain has always been seen as concerned with "training in truth production" (Kelly et al., 2000, p.4). Simpson's (2000) arguments on revisiting the interpretation of the goals of higher education in institutions support this, especially when the concept of knowledge is contested. In educational practices, this indicates a movement away from the pursuit of knowledge as single truth, towards a more constructed nature of knowledge in order to situate it in a specific cultural and historical context.

This view of the development of knowledge as a social phenomenon (Gergen, 1985) and the special emphasis that is placed on the development of knowledge as a social activity makes social constructionism a very relevant theory in terms of inquiry into pedagogical practices. Tertiary educational institutions are acknowledged centres of knowledge producers through scientific research practices that develop theory and publish results. As such, they should not escape the social constructionist inquiry into the process through which knowledge is established and accepted as valid and reliable in communities just because of their status as credible knowledge producers.

The view of knowledge as social construction also has implications for the role of trainers and students. Usher and Edwards (1994) support this by saying that in order to be a trainer working from a postmodern perspective, it is first necessary to abandon the position of the "one who knows" and to become a student again, one who recognises his or her own lack of knowledge and the fact that the process of learning

is never complete. From a postmodern perspective, therefore, the modernist distinction between trainers and students is never clear-cut (Beck, 1993). The deconstruction of this relationship does not, however, imply a classroom without any structure or a move towards destruction, but rather the redefining of boundaries through collaborative practices (Souza, 2002).

The Postmodern Turn – The Valuing of Other and Different Accounts of Knowledge

The postmodern turn does not represent the replacement of the abovementioned metanarratives or suggest doing away with them, but is interested rather in a particular form of resistance in encounter with them (Edwards & Usher, 2001). Gergen (2001b) adds that the resistance has as its motivation the fostering of new, more viable and more practically useful theoretical conceptualisations. The nature of these encounters is riddled with doubt towards and questioning of any foundational claims as well as scepticism that certain kinds of knowledge have "worthwhile" status and others not (Blake, 1996). One of the challenges in postmodern educational practices is thus to gain access to other processes of knowledge production which have previously been silent/silenced. This access may then open up the possibility of valuing other accounts of difference.

To explore the concept of *difference* differently to traditional modern approaches has also been a central theme in the postmodern literature, and presents an important challenge in postmodern educational practice (Kanpol, 1992). Difference in educational practice is important because of the inherent power structures that are associated with "the difference" between people. Too often, from a modernist viewpoint, difference has been reduced to institutional policy in an effort to eliminate it. Affirmative action policies are an example of this. Postmodernists do not agree that this rectifies the imbalances in power, but suggest that it rather perpetuates the view that being different is being weak (Kanpol, 1992).

Elliot (2000) holds the view that postmodern theory offers the possibility of listening, interpreting and translating the differences that are situated in narrative accounts in order to highlight the heterogeneity of social differences and cultural exclusions. Narrative analysis within a social constructionist framework is one of the research practices within postmodern theory that may attend to these differences. The specific steps of this process are outlined in chapter 1 and are demonstrated in the

section on stories on students' lives. Within this call for the recognition of difference is also an argument for balancing the act of highlighting that which is different with a call for the exploration of similarities in struggles that may lead to a sense community, identity and the interrelated nature of being human.

With reference to this research, therefore, postmodern thought has very specific implications for the conceptualisation of students' experiences. As part of the resistance against the discourse of educational practices as being inherently emancipatory, Rosenau (1992) points out that postmodern researchers seek to illuminate the differences between students rather than find the commonalities. This focus on difference is central to the postmodern questioning of universal properties and reason and also ties in with the work of Lyotard (1984), who states that postmodern thought is against a world that promotes absolutes and universal truths. A focus on difference also underpins the so-called political project in postmodernism that shifts the locus of power from the privileged to the marginalised and oppressed. As a postmodern researcher this means becoming involved in the political aspects of teaching (Atkinson, 2002; Blake, 1996) through deconstructing grand and universal educational and psychological narratives, and making room to be able to hear other, previously disempowered voices (such as those of students in an educational context).

It is therefore important to explore the stories of students' lives and experiences as they are created in interaction with the learning context, not only to acknowledge differences, but also to enable me to write a narrative that contains the shared and similar experiences of students. In attending to the tension between difference and similarity, I address some of the criticisms against social constructionism that state that without a sense of unifying group identity, minority groups or previously silenced groups (such as students) struggle to overcome elements of oppression contained in metanarratives (Kelly, 1999). Through accessing and presenting students' stories, this research takes up the challenge that postmodernism brings to educational practices insofar as it results in the valuing of different sources of knowledge (such as the texts and visual images produced by students) and a corresponding devaluing of using only discipline-based knowledge (as generated by recognised academics in the filed of educational practices) (Edwards & Usher, 2001).

It seems therefore that the ultimate challenge that postmodernism poses for educational practice is to investigate the processes of knowledge transmission and

production in training contexts, and to question the extent to which these processes enable students to cope with the difficulties of continually repositioning themselves within the changing discourses in society.

Possibilities and Limitations in Social Constructionism

In my reflections here, I briefly show how the themes that I chose to discuss in the previous section both create and limit possibilities within which constructions can take place. In my choosing to write about certain texts, I positioned them as opening up possibilities in this research project, but by choosing them, I also omitted others. Through my engagement with the texts, I have therefore become aware of the fact that social constructionism (and by implication postmodernism), like any other lens we use to look at the world, has limitations that allow certain constructs and not others.

The discussion on the constructional quality of language and narratives is central to my interest in the process of constructing an identity as a counsellor. Narrative counselling, as a therapeutic framework that is congruent with a postmodern and social constructionist approach, makes it possible for me explore the process of constructing counsellor identity. It was also important to write about self-reflexive practices as a way of questioning the existence of an objective science of psychology as this concept (the impossibility of objectivity) relates strongly to an anti-individualist stance and the acceptance of a multiversal human nature.

In my discussion on educational practices, I chose to highlight the metanarrative of progress as an argument to support the conceptualisation of people as dynamic and ever changing, positioning them in a learning context where the narratives of mastery are challenged through the ever-changing nature of knowledge. This naturally also relates then to questioning the metanarrative of knowledge transmission, and links to the idea that in a postmodern world, knowledge is co-created in classrooms and not delivered to students as made-up parcels.

However, at the heart of the acceptance of the constructional qualities of language within a certain context lies the tension between possibility and limitation, and a message of liberation and constraint. In this acceptance lies the promise that it is possible to change any reality through different or alternative social processes, which come about through certain language practices. However, it then becomes appropriate to ask about the agency of people, especially if people themselves are constructed as

products of language and the focus is more on persons as outcomes rather than initiators (Harre, 1989).

Nightingale and Cromby (1999) write about areas of possible limitation when it comes to peoples' constructional power to create or change reality. These areas are embodiment and materiality, and concern us in our work with clients and students. It is important to acknowledge the fact that the me-subject that we concern ourselves with in psychology and education inhabits a specific body as context-of-one. This context-of-one always has a number of limitations in which the personal life narrative can be written. It is through every person's bodiliness that these limitations exist; and they are hard to find in social constructionist thinking about embodied people. Materiality refers to the physical nature of the world we live in (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999) and leads us to the same conclusion as thinking about embodiment from a social constructionist stance. Materiality could create both possibilities for and limitations on the social constructions that are possible within these boundaries. When these are not taken into account, or are seen as things that can be constructed differently through alternative languaging, social constructionism loses its credibility.

In trying to relate these two issues to the domains of psychology and education, and specifically to the training of counsellors, I think that exploring the concept of limitations and possibilities within which one can construct reality is important for trainers and students in the process of becoming counsellors. In making transparent the limitations of trainers and students, counsellors and clients, we are able to develop a respectful stance towards acknowledging the fact that knowledge is not only produced within a social and historical context, but also within a personal life history context, and one that also includes embodiment and materiality.

Five Students' Stories

The first part of the following section provides the reader with the verbatim data as well as the story grids of the stories of five participants. The five participants were selected on a random basis for the purpose of clarifying the analysis procedure. The name that the students gave to the module is the pseudonym used to protect their identities. In the second section, I introduce the narrative themes and patterns that emerged from the analyses of all the students' texts to the audience, integrated with the literature.

Participant: "Challenge" - Externalising Narrative

My relationship with the module was a real challenge to me and therefore I would like to name the module Challenge. Challenge was first introduced by Mrs du Preez. Challenge was different from all the other modules as Challenge grew with me. Challenge did not come equipped with a full schedule and a manual. Elizabeth allowed challenge to grow with me, but Challenge was always allowed to challenge my boundaries, thus stimulating my growth. Challenge demanded more work from the trainer, as it was unstructured. She had to be very familiar with the field in order to accommodate any of challenge growths pains, growth spurts or any expected changes. Challenge did not want me to be like it, but to realise and possibly adopt its thought processes. Challenge wanted me to let go of expert knowledge and to free-fall into counselling with only myself as a parachute. But as always, Challenge allowed me free choice, if challenge became authoritarian, it just wouldn't be Challenge any more. At first Challenge does not seem so demanding, but as challenge crawls under your skin you become more and more aware of how demanding it really is. Challenge does not ask you to bring just your mind to class but your whole being. Challenge asks you not only to attend to your client's emotions and biases but also to your own. Challenge helps you to unpack the beliefs and ideas, which you never questioned. Sometimes these beliefs had formed the base of whom you are. This is frightening as sometimes you doubt that Challenge will be able to guide you to unpack it without causing your whole self to come tumbling down. Thus Challenge asks students to be open-minded and adventurous. Challenge has helped me to safely look at who I am. Challenge held my hand as I explored the deep caverns of self. I have always seen myself as open-minded and non-judgmental. Through Challenge I have discovered how many biases and ingrained generally accepted truths I do harbour. Challenge has aided me to be more comfortable with myself as I now realise that these societal beliefs (discourses) are ingrained in all of us, it is not a fatal personality flaw. Challenge has empowered me with the knowledge that can change my own narrative by exploring alternative narratives. Through Challenge my intimate relationships have improved. With the help of Challenge, I have learnt to personify problems, externalise them and examine histories and discourse critically. Challenge has afforded me the opportunity to have new insights into my casual interactions. Challenge has given me its pair of glasses with which I now examine my relationships. While this is very

interesting it can be very dangerous and externalisation scares people off in everyday conversations. Challenge may have deprived me of the safety net of expert knowledge in the counselling situation, but it has also replaced it with something else. Challenge has allowed me to develop a new frame of mind. One of curiosity and co-narration. Challenge has given me more confidence in the counselling situation, as I now know that if you are non-judgmental and really curious and interested you van do little harm. All in all Challenge has challenged me to leave my comfort zone and grow. I feel that Challenge's effects on me were positive as the Challenge afforded me the opportunity for directed growth.

Story Grid: "Challenge"

	Externalising Written Conversations
Past Experiences	Previous modules had full schedules and manuals.
	She thought she was open-minded and non-judgemental
	She had a safety net of expert knowledge in the counselling situation
	She was in a comfort zone
Present Experiences	This module is different and grows with her as the module does not have a schedule and a manual.
	She also thinks that the module demands more work from the trainer.
	She realises that she harbours many biases and ingrained general truths.
	She has to let go of expert knowledge and free-fall into counselling with only herself as parachute
	She has to bring her whole being to class, not only her mind.
	She feels safe in the module.
	She does not have to be like the module, but possibly adopt its thought processes. She still has free choice as authoritarianism would not fit within the module.
	She has to attend to her own and her clients' assumptions.
Future Intentions	The module empowered her by giving her alternative narratives about herself.
	She will have more confidence in the counselling situation, as she now has a counselling narrative of co-narration and curiosity
	The module has challenged her to leave her comfort zone and grow.

Participant: Challenge

Challenge participated in the module Structured Counselling that was presented as part of the BPsych programme in 2002. She is 24 years old.

Past Experiences

Challenge previously participated in modules that had schedules and manuals and she was in a comfort zone in her position as student:

> My relationship with the module was a real challenge to me and therefore I would like to name the module Challenge. Challenge was first introduced by Mrs du Preez. Challenge was different from all the other modules as Challenge grew with me. Challenge did not come equipped with a full schedule and a manual.

She also wrote about the fact that she thought that she was open-minded and non-judgmental. She felt that in a counselling situation, her safety net was her expert knowledge. She says:

> I have always seen myself as open-minded and non-judgmental …...Challenge may have deprived me of the safety net of expert knowledge in the counselling situation.

Present Experiences

Challenge could reflect on the fact that this module was different for her and grew with her as it did not have a fixed schedule and a manual, but that this meant that the module demanded more work from the trainer as she (the trainer) had to be comfortable with change. She said:

> Elizabeth allowed Challenge to grow with me, but Challenge was always allowed to challenge my boundaries, thus stimulating my growth. Challenge demanded more work from her, as it was unstructured. She had to be very familiar with the field in order to accommodate any … growths pains, growth spurts or any expected changes.

She also wrote about the biases and ingrained general truths that she harboured and remarks that she had to let go of (this) expert knowledge. She had to bring her whole being to class, not only her mind, and be open-minded and adventurous.

Through this process she felt that the module provided a safe environment to explore her own process.

> Challenge did not want me to be like it, but to realise and possibly adopt its thought processes. Challenge wanted me to let go of expert knowledge and to free-fall into counselling with only myself as a parachute. But as always, challenge allowed me free choice, if Challenge became authoritarian, it just wouldn't be Challenge any more. ...Challenge has helped me to safely look at who I am. Challenge held my hand as I explored the deep caverns of self.

Future Intentions

Challenge wrote little about her future intentions except to say that the module has empowered her by giving her alternative narratives about herself. She also had more confidence in counselling situations as she now had a counselling narrative of co-narration and curiosity. She concluded by saying that the module had challenged her to leave her comfort zone and grow.

> Challenge has allowed me to develop a new frame of mind. One of curiosity and co-narration. Challenge has given me more confidence in the counselling situation, as I now know that if you are non-judgmental and really curious and interested you can do little harm. All in all Challenge has challenged me to leave my comfort zone and grow. I feel that Challenge's effects on me were positive as the Challenge afforded me the opportunity for directed growth.

Narrative Core

The experiences of this student in her relationship with Challenge seem to centre on a movement from certainty to uncertainty in the contexts of class structure, her knowledge and her own biases and ingrained truths. In this movement, she could experience growth towards becoming a more confident and less judgmental counsellor in the safe environment that the module provided.

Participant: "A-Thought-Provoking-Alternative" - Externalising Narrative

At the beginning of the year 2002 I began to participate in a module, which focuses on Narrative counselling. I find this term not descriptive enough and prefer to name this module "A thought provoking alternative", as I found it challenging my

existing views of counselling. Not only is the thought provoking alternative challenging my views about counselling, but also my views about class structure. The ways in which the thought provoking alternative is presented is rather contrary to the norm. It leaves a lot of room to improvisation and the use of own initiative. Furthermore it compels me to prepare for class; else I would feel like a fool during class discussions and role plays of which there are many. Despite this contemporary approach, the "thought provoking alternative" still makes use of strict time limits, which can be irritating, especially when I am enjoying the role plays. The purpose of the "thought-provoking alternative" is to teach me, the psychology student, and a different way of viewing people with problems. Problems are viewed as external to people, which asks of me to somewhat abandon my predominantly psychodynamic view. By learning about externalisation psychodynamic views were not challenged by the "thought provoking alternative" but also questioned as to the benefits of seeing the person as the problem. "The thought provoking alternative" has impacted on my self-concept in a very positive way. This is due to the fact that it has enabled me to view difficulties that I am experiencing as apart from me, rather than as internal weaknesses of character. The "thought provoking alternative" has also aided in making me more accepting of others in that I don't view them as troubled people anymore, but rather as people who are experiencing trouble. This change in view has created a better sense of understanding and empathy in all my relationships. "The thought provoking alternative" has been beneficial in most ways and this includes my future as counsellor. After completion of "the thought provoking alternative" I have more knowledge and a broader perspective as such. This enables me to have a more eclectic and holistic approach in future counselling, which I view as very beneficial for my future clients and myself.

Story Grid: "A Thought Provoking Alternative"

	Externalising Written Conversation
Past Experiences	Thought about people in a predominantly psychodynamic way – person as the problem.
	Thought about her own problems as internal character weaknesses.
Present Experiences	The module challenges her views on counselling and class structure.
	Compels her to prepare for class.
	There is a lot of room for improvisation and own initiative.
	Externalisation challenges the idea of seeing the problem as the person.

	It impacts positively on her self-concept as she could see her own problems as separate.
	She now has more knowledge and a broader perspective.
Future Intentions	She will follow a more eclectic and holistic approach.
	It will be beneficial for her clients.

Participant: A-Thought-Provoking-Alternative

A-Thought-Provoking-Alternative participated in the module Structured Counselling that was presented as part of the BPsych programme in 2002. She is 22 years old.

Past Experiences

A-Thought-Provoking-Alternative can remember the time when she thought about people in a predominantly psychodynamic way. She thought of people as being problems and felt that her own problems were internal character weaknesses. She says:

> The purpose of "a thought-provoking alternative" is to teach me, the psychology student, a different way of viewing people with problems. Problems are viewed as external to people, which asks of me to do somewhat abandon my predominantly psychodynamic view. By learning about externalisation, psychodynamic views were not challenged by "a thought provoking alternative" but also questioned as to the benefits of seeing the person as the problem

Present Experiences

A-Thought-Provoking-Alternative begins by saying that the module challenges her views on counselling as well as class structure, and she comments on the tension between the new or contemporary way of teaching and the structures of the context of educational settings such as lecture time limits.

> At the beginning of the year 2002 I began to participate in a module, which focuses on Narrative counselling. I find this term not descriptive enough and prefer to name this module "A thought provoking alternative", as I found it challenging my existing views of counselling. Not only is the thought provoking alternative challenging my views about counselling, but also my views about class structure. The ways in which the thought provoking

alternative is presented is rather contrary to the norm. It leaves a lot of room to improvisation and the use of own initiative. Furthermore it compels me to prepare for class, else I would feel like a fool during class discussions and role plays of which there are many. Despite this contemporary approach, the "thought provoking alternative" still makes use of strict time limits, which can be irritating, especially when I am enjoying the role plays.

She also feels that the module has had a positive influence on her self-concept as it helped her to see her own and other people's difficulties as being separate from the person. She could move from seeing "troubled people" to seeing "people experiencing trouble".

> The thought provoking alternative has impacted on my self-concept in a very positive way. This is due to the fact that it has enabled me to view difficulties that I am experiencing as apart from me, rather than as internal weaknesses of character. The thought provoking alternative has also aided in making me more accepting of others in that I don't view them as troubled people anymore, but rather as people who are experiencing trouble. This change in view has created a better sense of understanding and empathy in all my relationships.

Future Intentions

A-Thought-Provoking-Alternative feels that she has gained more knowledge and a broader perspective that will be beneficial for her future as a counsellor. Her new approach that is more eclectic and holistic is also beneficial to her clients.

> The thought provoking alternative has been beneficial in most ways and this includes my future as counsellor. After completion of "the thought provoking alternative" I have more knowledge and a broader perspective as such. This enables me to have a more eclectic and holistic approach in future counselling, which I view as very beneficial for my future clients and myself.

Narrative Core

The shift from viewing her own and other people's problems as being internal and part of who one is to a position where she can see that problems are not people, seems to guide this student's story on being in relationship to the module. The name

that she gives to the module, "A Thought Provoking Alternative", inhabits this shift from thinking about herself and other people in a certain way, to developing alternative ways of thinking about people, counselling and class structure. In this shift, the student is able to develop a better self-concept and a more accepting attitude towards others.

Participant: "Snooky" - Externalising Narrative

I will call this module Snooky that is also my dog's name. I will call it this because Snooky is still a puppy ad is still growing and learning (just like I am on this subject). I will also call it this because I love Snooky and she came along in my life just when I needed her (just like this subject). The manner in which Snooky is presented is very influential in my life. Snooky affects me whenever I am in class, learning about her or talking to my friends and relatives. Snooky is presented to me by two lecturers in a theoretical as well as practical way. They also show Snooky to me by acting like Snooky during class time. In enjoy the way Snooky is presented to me because I believe that Snooky and I have many things in common and this comes through in the manner that Snooky is presented in class. I believe that Snooky has a very big purpose in my life and future. Snooky is there to help me find ways to understand human identities and to speak to people about their lives and problems. Snooky will also help me understand the therapeutic relationships and ethic or politics of therapy. Snooky helps me to be respectful, non-blaming, not the expert and separate the problem from the person. Snooky will also reveal people's strong points so that they come overcome their problems by themselves using these aspects. Snooky believes that when you question people you should be curious and ask questions that one truly does not know the answer to. I agree with Snooky on these principles. Snooky wants students who participate in her to do their best not just for themselves but for the people they are going to work with. Snooky wants me and every one to learn as much as they can about her as it will add to their knowledge as well as making them good therapists one day. Snooky affected my sense of self in that I realised that my perspectives are just that - my perspective. Snooky showed me by talking to me through the voices of my lecturers that my ideas are just as important to me as other people's ideas are important to them. Snooky gave me the freedom of accepting others although I disagree with them. Snooky influences my life in my

relationships with others. Snooky showed me that respect is important in relationships as well as being non-judgmental. In my relationships with my husband and others Snooky has shown me that my way does not have to be the right way. In my work as a counsellor I always feel that Snooky is next to me holding my hand. Snooky is constantly reminding me that what is true for others is in fact the truth for them and I should not try and change that unless the person wants to change it.

Story grid: "Snooky"

	Externalising Written Conversations
Past Experiences	The course came to her at the right time. She can see that she already had many things in common with the course.
Present Experiences	She is growing and learning in this course. The course represents narrative counselling in a process manner. This allows her to see the value of her own opinions. It helps her to understand human identity and to be respectful and non-blaming and not to be the expert. The course wants students to their best for themselves and the people they work with. She realises that everyone's perspective is relative.
Future Intentions	In her work as a counsellor, the course will be a constant companion.

Participant: Snooky

Snooky participated in the module Structured Counselling that was presented as part of the BPsych programme in 2002. She is 25 years old.

Past Experiences

It was only in looking back that Snooky realised that she had many things in common with the module. It also felt to her as if the module came to her at the right time in her life, when she needed it. She does not elaborate on what the reason for this could be, however.

Present Experiences

In her story on the module, Snooky feels that the process of training allowed her to see that her opinions were as important as other people's experiences and

opinions and vice versa. Through this she can learn how to be respectful, non-blaming, non-judgemental and how not to be the expert. She writes:

> Snooky will also help me understand the therapeutic relationships and ethic or politics of therapy. Snooky helps me to be respectful, non-blaming, not the expert and separate the problem from the person. Snooky wants students who participate in her to do their best not just for themselves but for the people they are going to work with. Snooky wants me and everyone to learn as much as they can about her as it will add to their knowledge as well as making them good therapists one day. Snooky affected my sense of self in that I realised that my perspectives are just that - my perspective. Snooky showed me by talking to me through the voices of my lecturers that my ideas are just as important to me as other people's ideas are important to them. Snooky gave me the freedom of accepting others although I disagree with them. Snooky influences my life in my relationships with others. Snooky showed me that respect is important in relationships as well as being non-judgmental.

Future Intentions

The student feels safe and comfortable in this approach as she writes about her future work as a counsellor. In her story about doing counselling, Snooky is holding her hand, and wants the best for her and her clients.

> In my work as a counsellor I always feel that Snooky is next to me holding my hand. Snooky is constantly reminding me that what is true for others is in fact the truth for them and I should not try and change that unless the person wants to change it.

Narrative Core

This student's story concerns her realisation that her own opinion is valued and valuable in the training context. This realisation makes it possible for her to allow clients to have their own opinions and truths. She can then change her attitude towards them, and move towards a more respectful and non-blaming position.

Participant: "The Guide" - Externalising Narrative

This is the story of my relationship with my/the Guide. It is a fairly new relationship for me, and can be quite complex. It is one of the first true relationships I have had with something of the nature of my guide (i.e. a module). My Guide meeting takes place once a week. I meet with it with a group of others. We share things we should probably not share outside of the presence of the Guide. It is a little awkward in a way because we become momentarily intimate and then must act as if we don't know so much about each other when we are away from the guide! The Guide forces me to do things that I dreaded before I met it. It makes me role play with the other students. Strangely enough, when we are with The Guide in small groups, it is not as dreadful or embarrassing as I expected. It gives us opportunities to apply the theory it teaches us which is the best way I learn. The Guide can expose emotions in me that I did not know I had. It makes me look at the world in a different way and examine myself carefully. Sometimes when I leave my Guide, I am "omgekrap" [annoyed] because I have many things to think about, my head is busy and I need to find someone to bounce my ideas off of. It has made me aware of things and assumptions I had no idea I had or believed. Because of this it's sometimes difficult meeting with the Guide and then leaving. It's like stepping out of a dark cave where you can hear your thoughts into a bright, busy and noisy world. The transition is not always easy. The Guide's function is like its name. It is there to act as a guide for my fellow students and me. It tries to open our eyes to new possibilities, and to examine these ideas. Its purpose is to change us in some way, by helping us to know ourselves better. It offers me new possibilities but let me decide whether I want to take them. It is easy to do what the guide asks me to do, because I understand what it says and it appeals to me. I sometimes feel sorry for those who do not agree with what the Guide says, because they struggle to do what It asks. In a way I wish I had met the Guide earlier in my studies, but I know that I would not have been ready for the meeting, and would not have benefited so much. The Guide has helped me clarify my sense of self. I feel more mature, focused and confident because the Guide challenged me to examine myself carefully, and I have. It has helped me to be more accepting of my flaws and weaknesses. It has empowered me to recognise my strengths and capitalise on them. It has had good effects on my sense of self.

Sometimes I feel as if the Guide has thrown a spanner into the works of some of my relationships. I am on a journey of self-discovery and it feels as though some of my friends haven't even started their engines. It has also helped me to expect less of those I care about. I have realised that it is not always necessary to fit into everyone's picture of "perfect couple", "perfect daughter", "perfect mother". What relationships I have, work well and that matters more than others opinions. In a way, The Guide affects my relationships in a good and bad way. By helping me to become more secure It distances me from some, but cements my relationships with others. The Guide has made me more confident as a counsellor by offering me a way of working that I feel comfortable with and enjoy. It offers me freedom from working in a prescriptive way as a counsellor, the effects of The Guide have been nothing but positive – it has helped me know myself as a counsellor and as a person. I may be far from my destination on my journey of self-discovery, but I am happy about the speed that I am travelling, and that The Guide offers me a map through the pleasant scenic route.

Story grid: "The Guide"

	Externalising Written Conversations
Past Experiences	She has never had a relationship with a module before.
Present Experiences	The course is like a guide for her. It makes her do things that she would not have done before and exposes emotions that she did not know she had. It makes her more aware and makes her look at the world in a different way. It opens her eyes to different possibilities, but lets her decide whether she wants to take them. She wishes that she had the guide earlier on in her studies, but wonders whether she would have been ready for the meeting. The module clarifies her sense of self. She is more mature, focused and confident, and can accept her weaknesses more. The module has good effects on her sense of self and she is more accepting of her flaws and weaknesses.
Future Intentions	She is still on her journey, but the guide has offered her a map.

Participant: The Guide

The guide participated in the module Structured Counselling that was presented as part of the BPsych programme in 2002. She is 22 years old.

Past Experiences

The Guide did not write much about her past experiences, except for the fact that she has never before had a relationship with something like a module.

Present Experiences

The Guide feels that the module is like a guide for her especially because it makes her do things that she would not have done before and exposes emotions that she did not know she had.

> The Guide can expose emotions in me that I did not know I had. It makes me look at the world in a different way and examine myself carefully. Sometimes when I leave my Guide, I am "omgekrap" [annoyed] because I have many things to think about, my head is busy and I need to find someone to bounce my ideas off of. It has made me aware of things and assumptions I had no idea I had or believed. Because of this it's sometimes difficult meeting with the Guide and then leaving. It's like stepping out of a dark cave where you can hear your thoughts into a bright, busy and noisy world. The transition is not always easy

Through exploring new ways of doing and feeling, she has become more aware and looks at the world in a different way as it has opened her eyes to alternative possibilities. However, she feels that she is still in control as she is able to decide whether she wants to act upon these possibilities or not.

> The Guide's function is like its name. It is there to act as a guide for my fellow students and me. It tries to open our eyes to new possibilities, and to examine these ideas. Its purpose is to change us in some way, by helping us to know ourselves better. It offers me new possibilities but let me decide whether I want to take them

In terms of her sense of self, The Guide felt that the module had a positive impact on her sense of self as she is now more accepting of her flaws and weaknesses.

Sometimes she wishes that she had the guide earlier on in her studies, but at the same time wonders whether she would have been ready for the encounter.

> In a way I wish I had met the Guide earlier in my studies, but I know that I would not have been ready for the meeting, and would not have benefited so much. The Guide has helped me clarify my sense of self. I feel more mature, focused and confident because the Guide challenged me to examine myself carefully, and I have. It has helped me to be more accepting of my flaws and weaknesses. It has empowered me to recognise my strengths and capitalise on them. It has had good effects on my sense of self.

Future Intentions

As with her past experiences, The Guide writes little about her future intentions. She realises that she is still on a journey, but that the guide has offered her a map. She also comments on the positive impact the guide had on her style as counsellor.

> The Guide has made me more confident as a counsellor by offering me a way of working that I feel comfortable with and enjoy. It offers me freedom from working in a prescriptive way as a counsellor, the effects of The Guide has been nothing but positive – it has helped me know myself as a counsellor and as a person. I may be far from my destination on my journey of self-discovery, but I am happy about the speed that I am travelling, and that The Guide offers me a map through the pleasant scenic route

Narrative Core

In writing about her relationship with the module, the metaphor of a guide steers her story. She tells us about her journey of discovering new ways of being and doing, while at the same time feeling guided and not forced. She experiences the changes within her as a person and as a counsellor as being on a journey with the module as a guide that will be with her for the remainder of her journey.

Participant: "The Coin" - Externalising Narrative

I was first introduced to "the coin" when we had our first lecture for SLK 460 at the beginning of the year. I remember it like yesterday; we had our class on the first

floor of the Human Sciences Building. There she stood, Mrs du Preez, with the coin in her hands. On the one side was my life, defined by stability and knowledge, but on the other side was something totally different. It was narrative counselling and I remember how she said that one must separate the problem from the person and thus give the problem an identity. It was exciting and the prospect of learning new skills was great, but I felt so comfortable with my side of the coin. Initially I though I might have to give it up, but then I realised that the purpose of the coin wasn't to change my mind or criticise the Rogerian perspective, but rather to expand my knowledge and the way I think. Mrs du Preez presented her side of the coin through the exploration of ourselves regarding the principles used in narrative counselling. We had to make a mind shift in the way we think and approach things, but there is no way I'm leaving my side of the coin away. Basically all the coin asks of me is to keep an open mind, and not make any judgements. I feel I have complied. I like this new side of the coin but to combine the two sides might take some time. I believe the coin has caused a few waves for me as in the past, regarding counselling. I regarded myself as person centred, which implies focusing on the feelings the person is experiencing. But now I have been introduced to this opposite side of the coin, which places so much focus on the problem. I guess, regarding my sense of self, that in order to grow, change and adaptation is necessary. Although the coin unsettled me at first, I strangely feel empowered by it now. I might not always use the narrative side of the coin, but at least I know it is there.

Regarding the effect of the coin on my relationships, I think at first I might have got a bit carried away and I realised that in its extreme, the narrative side of the coin may be overwhelming. However I do feel that certain aspects of the narrative side of the coin have found their way in how I approach my relationships and how I refer to them. It just dawned on me that I sometimes view my relationship with my girlfriend as something I can hold in my hand as tangible. Another nice thing about this new side of the coin that I have been introduced to is that it really embraces one's imagination. I therefore really think that I could incorporate the narrative side of the coin, especially when working with kids. By writing this story of my experience with the coin, I realise how much I have already integrated the two.

Story Grid: "The Coin"

	Externalising Written Conversations
Past Experiences	Life was defined by stability and knowledge. He regarded himself as begin person centred and felt comfortable with Rogers' approach.
Present Experiences	It is exciting to learn new skills. He realises that the module does not want him to change his mind, but to expand the way he thinks. The presentation of the module is through the exploration of the students' selves using the principles of narrative counselling. He has to make a mind shift in the way he thinks and be more open minded and less judgemental. He realises that in order to grow, change and adaptation are necessary. Initially the module unsettled him, but now he feels strangely empowered by it.
Future Intentions	He will use narrative counselling especially because it embraces imagination in the work with children. He wants to integrate the person and problem centred approaches and in the writing of this story, realises how much he has already does so.

Participant: The Coin

The Coin participated in the module Structured Counselling that was presented as part of the BPsych programme in 2002. He has previous counselling experience at a lay counselling service in South Africa and is 23 years old.

Past Experiences

The Coin felt that his life was characterised by stability and knowledge until this module came along and presented him with the other side of the coin: narrative counselling. He had previously been very comfortable with Rogers' client-centred approach.

> I was first introduced to "the coin" when we had our first lecture for SLK 460 at the beginning of the year. I remember it like yesterday; we had our class on the first floor of the Human Sciences Building. There she stood, Mrs du Preez, with the coin in her hands. On the one side was my life, defined by stability and knowledge, but on the other side was something totally different

Present Experiences

The Coin writes that the presentation of the module for him happens through the exploration of the students' selves using the principles of narrative counselling.

He also remarks that he is very comfortable with his knowledge. During the classes, however, he realises that the module does not want him to change his mind, but to expand the way he thinks. He could now express excitement about learning new skills because he knows that in order to grow, change and adaptation are necessary. He sees the mind shift that he makes as moving to a more open-minded and less judgemental position. At first the module unsettles him, but later he feels empowered by it.

> It was exciting and the prospect of learning new skills was great, but I felt so comfortable with my side of the coin. Initially I though I might have to give it up, but then I realised that the purpose of the coin wasn't to change my mind or criticise the Rogerian perspective, but rather to expand my knowledge and the way I think. The trainer presented her side of the coin through the exploration of ourselves regarding the principles used in narrative counselling
>
> We had to make a mind shift in the way we think and approach things, but there is no way I'm leaving my side of the coin away. Basically all the coin asks of me is to keep an open mind, and not make any judgements. I feel I have complied. I like this new side of the coin but to combine the two sides, might take some time… I guess, regarding my sense of self, that in order to grow, change and adaptation is necessary. Although the coin unsettled me at first, I strangely feel empowered by it now. I might not always use the narrative side of the coin, but at least I know it is there.

Future Intentions

The Coin writes about the area of counselling where he would be able to incorporate the narrative ideas that he has been exposed to during this module.

> I therefore really think that I could incorporate the narrative side of the coin, especially when working with kids.

Narrative Core

The story of The Coin holds as narrative core his struggle to find a place for the other side of the coin in his ways of thinking about counselling. He finally finds a balance between honouring his way of thinking, while being able to see that change and adaptation are necessary to grow. In the end he finds an area in counselling where he can use narrative counselling principles without feeling as if he has abandoned his ways of doing counselling.

Duet: Training and Counselling as Contexts for Repositioning

Introduction

In this integration, which also serves as metacommentary on the narratives of the students, I have "collapsed" the positions of trainer and counsellor and student and client. This is based on the fact that the themes relating to these positions overlap and inform one another. In the integration, the duet expresses the movement towards the repositioning of counsellors and trainers, which opens up a context for the co-construction of knowledge through collaborative practice, and results also in the repositioning of clients and students.

In this section, therefore, I introduce the common melodic themes and patterns which link the experiences of the students with the relevant literature. **Positioning** as a main theme crystallised from the analysis process that I followed. A short introduction on positioning in uncertainty serves as an orientation to this discussion.

Positioning in Uncertainty

During the first three years of their undergraduate training, the students were mostly introduced to psychological theories and applications of these theories in counselling practices that originated in the modernist era. The introduction of postmodern ideas relating to psychology and counselling was not experienced without difficulty and resistance as the students felt comfortable with their stability and knowledge. The students felt that they knew psychological theories, had guidelines on structured interventions, and knew how to save their clients.

The majority of the students commented on their initial feelings of uncertainty, anxiety and fear when they first started with the module. They used words such as "insecurity", "being scared", "hysteria" and "confusion" to describe the emotions related to this uncertainty. This might have been because this was the first time the students were formally introduced to postmodernism, social constructionism and narrative counselling in their undergraduate studies. The following textbook, chapters and articles were prescribed as introductory material at the beginning of the module:

- Morgan, A. (2000). *What is narrative therapy?* Adelaide: Dulwich Centre Publications.

- Gergen, K.J. (1992) Towards a postmodern psychology. In S. Kvale (Ed.), *Psychology and postmodernism* (pp. 17–30). London: Sage.

- Freedman, J. & Combs, G. (1996) *Narrative therapy: The social construction of preferred realities.* New York: Norton.

- Doan, R.E. (1997). Narrative therapy, postmodernism, social constructionism, and constructivism: Discussions and distinctions. *Transactional Analysis Journal,* 27 (2), 128–133.

This theme of uncertainty in students' narratives not only expressed their reaction to the *content* of the module, however, but also their reaction to the new or different way of training, in other words, the *process* of training. They commented on the fact that this module did not have a worked-out manual and was co-created with the trainers as the module progressed. They observed a change in the relationship between them and the trainers (being familiar with a hierarchical relationship), and this led to a realisation that they had to take more responsibility than what was usually required of them, and that they had to explore new ways of being students. They could sense the tension between their anxiety and their excitement about the possibility of growth and change as they felt that the "unstructuredness" of the module allowed every student to experience his or her own meaning of it. Within this uncertainty, themes emerged on the changing positions in the relationship between students and trainers as well as the changing positions of counsellors and clients in the counselling context.

Repositioning Trainers and Counsellors

In postmodern educational practices, a hierarchical position with inherent boundaries between trainers and students is not viewed as congruent with a postmodern philosophy (Beck, 1993). The main narrative themes that crystallised from the students' stories were "informal ways of teaching" and "the trainer not being the expert". Usher and Edwards (1994) believe that trainers working from a postmodern perspective need to abandon the position of the "one who knows" and become students that recognise their own lack of knowledge.

This repositioning of trainers will necessarily lead to redefining boundaries through collaborative practices, which implies an equality of contribution (Souza, 2002) towards knowledge construction. Trainers cannot hold the exclusive position of being the expert anymore and students are not by default the ones "who do not know". The way that I presented the module to them was unstructured, as was the so-called "structured" approach to counselling. In spite of their initial reaction, the students could write stories of being recognised as actively participating adults in their own learning stories.

During this training programme, I therefore attempted to train from a deconstructed expert position through the application of resistance practices as set out in the first chapter. This de-constructed position as trainer at first invited resistance from the students as it was in contrast to their expectations of trainers. The students wrote that the relationship started off with the trainer being a stranger and an enemy, and only later developed into the trainer and the training material being seen as a friend. They felt that the module had friends called anxiety, fear, insecurity and uncertainty who came along in the beginning and who told them that they would never be able to be counsellors.

Other students felt that the apparent "indecisiveness" of the trainer was actually a good thing, as they could then discover things for themselves. They thought that this unstructured approach to training encouraged them to minimise judgement and categorise people into problems because expertise was questioned through this training process. The fact that the trainer was not in the expert position of having a monopoly on what knowledge is, also encouraged students to let go of their expert knowledge.

The students' *previous* training experiences not only familiarised them with the expert positions of trainers, but also emphasised the expert position of the counsellor. Within this framework, they thought that structured counselling would be like giving advice. The process of being comfortable with certain counselling discourses, especially discourses that allow counsellors positions of power that participate in and support the discourse, is a familiar one in the field of counselling. Giving up familiar, comfortable and powerful positions does not occur without resistance. The students felt as if they were stuck in certain psychological discourses and to become unstuck required a lot of thinking and challenging existing ways of being a counsellor.

In contrast to this "expert discourse", narrative counselling theory introduced the students to the concept that the counsellor is not the expert but a co-author, and adopted a position of "not knowing" and "the client is the expert" (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992) in the counselling context. This also implies a deconstruction of the expert position that counsellors hold in the modern discourse on counselling. Sometimes this position is in contrast to clients' expectation of receiving advice and is also met with resistance at first (just as the students at first reacted with anxiety and hostility towards the deconstructed trainer position).

The students wrote stories on the fact that before this module, their thoughts on counselling (and psychology) were established and understandable. This module made them feel that they had to start all over again, that they had to deconstruct their picture of counselling, take their perceptions apart and evaluate them in order to gain a new perspective on psychology. Some students saw the goal of the module as wanting them to question their old ideas on psychology and helping them realise that all the ideas and facts that they had learnt over the years represent only one of many ways of looking at people. This was experienced as positive by some students who stated that the module challenged them and pushed them beyond the walls of taking for granted what they think, feel and see. Within this challenging environment, however, they felt that the module spoke to them, as one student put it, "in a gentle and encouraging voice and shows them the world like they have never seen it before".

Other students' stories reflected the difficulties in this process, saying that it was an effort for them to integrate the new way of thinking with their old knowledge

of Freud, safe modernistic principles and the internalised ideas they had on psychology. They felt that this expectation put a lot of pressure on them.

Most of the students could, however, comment on the realisation that they had previously had "thin descriptions" of what counselling is, and that they had felt that the counsellor should know what the problem is and be able to generate the solutions for it. The previous counselling approaches that they had been exposed to expected the counsellor to have the answers to problems. Some of the students felt that this "expert knowledge" was their safety net in counselling situations.

The students could also reflect on the fact that the change of position as counsellor required introspection, which included deconstructing their own ideas as they realised that they (and not psychological theory or tests) are the most important therapeutic instrument in the counselling context. One student wrote that "the module expected me to free-fall into counselling with only myself as a parachute."

In contrast to this "expert" position, students then started writing a different story about clients' problems. They spoke of being accepting and sensitive towards their clients, which meant having respect for them and not changing their perspectives for them in counselling. They also wrote about their increased compassion, empathy, grace and acceptance of people and the unique circumstances of their lives, as well as the fact that they expected less of people in terms of being perfect. This in turn freed them from working in a prescriptive way. They could write stories of hope that they had for their clients that were informed by the fact they could find an alternative story for themselves in this module and could help clients see that no one was a prisoner of discourses.

The stories that the students wrote about themselves as counsellors contained ideas such as "confidence as counsellors"; "enriched their lives and relationships with other people" and "…sense of self was influenced in a good way". One student wrote that she was now someone who, more than ever, is visited by critical thought, reflection and high self-esteem. Possibly one of the most important realisations was that the students could see that the purpose of the training module was not for them to become good counsellors, but for them to be able to help people find their preferred realities in their culture, environment and social relationships.

Co-Creating Knowledge Through Collaborative Practices

This repositioning of trainers leads us to stories in the literature that speak of collaborative learning, where the activity of training is conceived of as a co-constructive process (Souza, 2002). In this definition of training, students become the "active other" – not a passive recipient of knowledge, but an active and equal constructor in the relationship between trainer, training material and students (Usher & Edwards, 1994). According to the students' stories, collaborative teaching practices in this module required them to take a more active position than what they were used to. Prepare, be present and participate were now the requirements for involvement in the module, in contrast to receiving, memorising and using knowledge as separate tool from who they are outside the classroom.

The stories of preparing, being present and participating also included the themes of taking responsibility as well as having to self-reflect. Responsibility meant that students had to take the initiative for communicating their needs to the trainers if they wanted the module to change direction either in content or process. Being able to say something and to see that what is said has constitutive power, led to the story "at last we are being treated like responsible adults", which was written by a 51 year-old student.

The ability to self-reflect and the capacity for change were also seen as ways of engaging in this module. Self-reflection as a characteristic of postmodern thought in psychology refers to the practice of questioning discourses in order to become aware of configurations of emancipation and or oppression within them (Usher & Edwards, 1994). Through self-reflection and exploration of the discourses in the students' lives, they could challenge dominant stories in their lives. They felt that the module led them on a journey of self-discovery about themselves; that it tested their limits and made them think critically about their reality.

The students noted that critical self-refection was part of this module. Most of them commented on the fact that the module encouraged them to think about who they are and why they want to be counsellors. This process of self-reflection took place through the exploration of their stories together with the discourses that kept these stories in place. One student could say that she has learnt not to be labelled by some discourses and to be in "productive conflict" with discourses in her life.

Through self-reflection, the students became aware of their own perceptions and how they use language to construct meaning, which led to an increase in self-knowledge and the possibility of writing an alternative self-narrative. As part of their more active and participatory position of being a student, students wrote stories about how they had to engage on a personal level with the training material and that this asked them to shift their own ideas and become more open-minded. Some students commented on the fact that they now had ideas that they never knew they had, and could share these within the context of engagement. The students had to give something in order to co-create as they were not passive receptors of knowledge, and so became aware of what they had to give in order to remain in relationship with the training material and the trainers. In these practices, training then becomes a process of knowledge creation and moves away from the modernistic educational domain where training is seen as the vehicle through which a singular truth is transmitted (Kelly et al., 2000).

One student also felt that the module was a personal experience with eternal value that made her question and integrate previously learnt material in psychology, which included reflecting on the position of the counsellor. I include the following verbatim response of one of the students as she beautifully captures the students' experiences:

Challenge said:

You ask students that Courage must visit them in this relationship. Courage helps me to explore new ideas and the unknown without fear. Courage also helps me to let go of Doubt, Shame and Low Self-esteem in order for me to do my work. This in turn allows Skills and Competency to visit me. Challenge usually invites Self-reflection along in order to look at my motives, thoughts, feelings and problems in my life. Critical thought is also present to be able to deconstruct my traditional thoughts in Depression, To be tired and Perfectionism. You therefore ask that I will have an honest look at my life house, as well as at the frequent visitors that I receive. It is then possible to write an alternative life narrative with the help of Competency and Skill. Challenge also asks that students accept the other students as well as their clients in spite of the problems that visit them, and not to allow Prejudice and Knowing Better to participate in the conversation. Challenge likes New Language and New Thoughts to be my friends.

When the relationship between students, trainer and training material invites the student to self-reflect, they can become open to a variety of ways to understand human nature. In so doing, they engage in knowledge construction that is reflective and relevant to their contexts. Students then develop an appreciation for the dynamic quality of reality and most importantly, through the facilitation of the ability to self-reflect, they are able to cope with the challenge of continually repositioning themselves within the changing discourses in society. Huxley (2002) supports this by stating that reflective practices facilitate an increased self awareness, critical thinking as well as cognisance of cultural diversity and social responsibility.

If we think of this relationship between students, learning material and the trainer as being an equal and collaborative partnership, it is possible to see that knowledge can be co-created in any one of these relational domains – trainer/training material; trainer/students and students/learning material. In using collaborative teaching practices, it is also possible for students to become aware of their own contribution in the act of knowledge creation. In this context, it is important that trainers working from a social constructionist perspective realise the importance of engaging students in a dialogue about knowledge creation in order for them to become aware of the constructed quality of knowledge (Sprague, 1992).

Narrative counselling practices also indicate a turn away from the counsellor's task of "discovering meaning" to "constructing meaning" through stories. A narrative approach to counselling highlights the importance of the counselling encounter as a dialogue of creating meaning through the counselling conversation and the stories and narratives that arise in that context..

Repositioning Students and Clients

The repositioning of students as co-authors might initially make them feel lost and confused, but it also challenges them to explore their own life stories, which leads to the revelation of many things they did not know about themselves. The students could story their experiences of becoming the experts in their own lives, which means that the trainer was not in a one-up position. With the realisation that the trainer was not the expert, the students could also see that they had more responsibility in co-constructing this relationship. They stated that the module never gave itself to them on

a silver platter, but that they had to look for it and get to know it, which implies activity and not passivity.

The goal of narrative counselling would also be the "construction of meaningful human existence" (Polkinghorne, 1988, p.182). A narrative approach to counselling adheres to the notion that counsellors can assist clients in the reconstruction of life narratives that have become too restrictive, and offer alternative narratives that are more congruent with current life experiences. This can facilitate the liberation of people from the control of the past interpretations they have attached to events and can open up the possibilities of renewal and freedom for change. In a narrative counselling context, once the counselling relationship has been established, it aims to facilitate clients' articulation of the narratives that give meaning to their lives. Clients are encouraged to reflect on the themes they use to interpret their own actions and the actions of others (Polkinghorne, 1988), thereby also inviting active participation in the counselling conversation.

In writing their stories, the students changed their perceptions of clients as people whose problems defined them, to a view of clients as people who sometimes struggle to write stories that promote their well-being and support their preferred selves. They could start accepting the fact that clients are the experts on their own lives and that they as counsellors could contribute to this position through developing a non-judgemental and accepting stance towards their clients' preferred self-narratives. The students could see that this approach places the client in the centre of the therapeutic process in a non-threatening and respectful manner.

Conclusion

The students experienced a repositioning on two levels – on a content level, where counselling practices from a postmodern perspective reposition counsellors and clients; and on a process level, in the application of narrative therapy to educational practices, where trainers and students are repositioned. In congruent training processes such as these, where content and process are consistent, students are facilitated to become aware of how their positioning in relationships with other people creates limits or opens up possibilities for "the other" to position themselves as passive or active. Gergen (1991) comments on the process of moving from an essentialist stance to the experience of various positions available to the self as a

phased process, where it is possible for people at the end of the process to give up the idea of private psychological property. This in turn facilitates the acknowledgement of others and the role they play in the constant and continuous construction of the self. This process of repositioning was storied by many students through the metaphor of a journey. During this journey, they could move from a position of anxiety, fear, uncertainty and needing positionings of confidence, to having confidence in their own positioning abilities.

<div align="center">The Writing Story of Chapter 2</div>

Since positioning is also the main theme in my story, in my reflection I compose a "writing story" for this chapter from the position of the author. In the methodology section of the Listening Guide, I engaged in referential reflexivity (May, 1998) from the positions of researcher and trainer to clarify the boundaries and limitations of these positions and to trace how these contributed to the choice of certain research processes. The decision to write from the position of academic writer is then an attempt to clarify my contribution in the *representation* of the students' stories in this chapter.

<div align="center">*Pullover to Cardigan*</div>

During my high school years, the girls in my school were not allowed to wear pullover cardigans, as these were considered unladylike, but instead had to wear button-down cardigans. However, I loved pullover cardigans and continued to wear them. The teachers would then make me take them off, and gave these away. This process continued until the day my mother refused to knit another pullover cardigan, and I started wearing button-down cardigans. This story reflects something of my lifelong struggle as I experienced rigidity in positions other people occupied in relation to me, which in turn forced me to change mine if the nature of the relationship as well as my survival required this shift.

My writing story of chapter 2 shares the theme of positioning as it tells the story of positioning myself within an academic writing discourse as I struggled to find a balance between my voice and the students' voices, my own signature and writing for an academic audience. When I started writing chapter 2, I identified strongly with

the stories of students that included themes of resistance, individuality, having a voice and being empowered. I was so taken in by the familiar and persuasive qualities of these students' stories that I wanted to include their stories as verbatim data and position them in the text as equal to academic literature. Through these writing acts I wanted to convince the audience of the "truth value" of these stories. I felt like their mother – as if I had to take the responsibility to make sure their voices were heard.

The other side of this story is that it was difficult for me to hear the voice of students who struggled within this "liberating" context and who expressed themes of dependence and passiveness. I wanted to include these stories in such a way that they would not attract attention, in other words, I wanted to un-story them in my writing. So this is what I did, until my supervisor (as representative of the audience) gave me a preliminary critical review that forced me to reflect on my own political agenda. One sentence in our conversation reverberated in my thoughts: *"You are writing your own grand narrative"*.

Once I reflected on this feedback, I could see that in my first attempt of writing this chapter, I had done exactly that which I did not want to do – my signature and voice was scribbled right over the stories of the students. I realised that I had to find a way to provide the audience access to the stories of the students in such a way that the audience could hear the stories and could create their own meaning in their interaction with the stories. I could then remember my position as composer – my task was to facilitate a listening experience by filtering out the noise through a clarified methodological position. My job was to make sure that all the melodies could be heard, not just some of them.

And then wait for the morning paper.

A Student's Reflections on Chapter 2

I think a good example of what you have written here is how the BPsych group reacted to the first few lectures of narrative therapy, for example your approach (casual, asking us our opinions, how the new way of teaching sparked off lots of chatter etc). Do you remember our reaction to you at first? It was with a bit of disbelief and suspicion that you were actually interested in our stories. We were used to the experience of our stories not being worthwhile or unimportant.

I was wondering why your theme naturally changed as you read the stories of the students. I find it very interesting that the theme of identity came out so strongly. I wonder if it wasn't because we were the first BPsych students that would be counsellors. Due to the controversy and uncertainty surrounding our degree we all experienced a measure of panic as no one could tell us if promises would materialise and what we would eventually be able to do. I wonder if your theme didn't change because the powers that be could not deliver their promised identity and so we as students engaged in the process of developing and finding our own identity and narrative therapy was the only place that made the space for this expression without the possibility of some form of "punishment" for it.

I agree the material wasn't met with resistance and difficulty but I would say a degree of suspicion and some confusion. Furthermore I don't think our confusion was just because of the new introduction but also had a lot to do with the "clash of content" it caused with what and how we had been previously taught. The people who taught us weren't really little 'gods' in narrative therapy's eyes and thank heavens we didn't have to become 'gods' too to be worth anything. After going through the process of realising that I did not have to be an expert, especially now in my internship, has actually taken so much pressure off my shoulders. As time goes on I feel more empowered as a therapist and I think my clients feel more empowered in themselves as I treat and approach them the way I was approached in the narrative therapy lectures.

I remember actually feeling cheated if I hadn't had a chance to say something or express my feelings in one of the classes. I took far more responsibility for my own learning – I had the power to write my own story of how much or little I would learn about a certain topic.

I know you mentioned that the students said that our experiences in the narrative lectures have impacted on our relationships but this was a very strong theme for me in the process that I went through. All my relationships changed – my marriage, my relationship with my family and my friends – in the way that in some openings were made for alternative stories and in others I stopped letting their dominant discourse impact me negatively.

Reading this chapter came to me at such an important time. My family has gone through a really difficult time with the loss of my father and many other difficulties that came with this event. Through everything I suppose that my dominant discourses and other people's discourses have really made the last two months exceptionally hard for me.   Reading your chapter has made me realise once again that I can live an alternative reality – one that works for me, one where I have control and am the expert of my life. I can change my story of "unrecognisable life" to one that is created by me.

CHAPTER 3

TRAINING COUNSELLORS IN A SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

Stories in the Literature

Introduction

The stories in this chapter focus on the training of psychologists and counsellors both internationally and in South Africa. The reason for including a discussion on the training of psychologists in a research study that is primarily concerned with the training of counsellors is that the registration category for registered counsellors only opened in 2003, and the formal training of counsellors at tertiary institutions in South Africa only started in 2001. For this reason, information regarding the training of lay counsellors in South Africa is also included.

In 1987, Van der Westhuizen and Plug stated that, apart from a study by Ebersohn (1983), no comprehensive investigation into the training of South African psychologists had been done. Over a decade later, Viljoen, Beukes and Louw (1999) reported a similar situation, noting that research on this subject was minimal. Since 1999, however, there have been a fair number of publications in the form of dissertations at tertiary institutions which address the training of psychologists at universities in South Africa (Academic and Library Division, Sabinet database. Retrieved March, 17, 2004 from www.sabinet.co.za)

History of Psychology as Profession in South Africa

Until 1974, psychology as a profession in South Africa was unregulated and practised by individuals who held various degrees in psychology, but had no formal registration as psychologists (Wassenaar, 1998). Prior to this, psychologists could register with the South African Medical and Dental Council from 1955 (although this was not compulsory), and a separate register for clinical psychologists was established in 1964 (Parker, 1986). Despite the existence of a register, no formal criteria governed registration, and there were therefore no formal training requirements that training institutions had to follow.

Three important influences created a need for formal registration in South Africa. These were the developments in applied psychology that took place during the Second World War (Biesheuvel, 1987; Louw, 1986), the increasing need for professional vocational guidance to assist the developing industrial section with personnel selection (Louw, 1986), and the influence of British trained psychologists who emigrated to South Africa after the Second World War (Parker, 1986).

Therefore, with the promulgation of Act 56 of 1974, psychology attained legal status as a profession in South Africa (Wassenaar, 1998). Since 1974, professional psychology has developed considerably, with over 8000 psychologists currently registered in South Africa. A survey done in South Africa in 1986 revealed that the profession has reached a level of development comparable to that of Australia and America (Manganyi & Louw, 1986).

The Training of Psychologists and Counsellors

In this section, the training of psychologists is discussed, specifically in terms of the orientation of training programmes as these are also relevant to the training of counsellors. The application of these orientations at a South African university will then be outlined to illustrate the way that the orientation is applied in practice. I also discuss the training of counsellors in the South African context, with reference to the training of lay counsellors at Life Line as well as the programme that was developed at the University of Pretoria for the training of registered counsellors.

The two orientations to training psychologists and counsellors that are briefly examined are the scientist-practitioner and the professional-practitioner orientations. A consideration of these orientations is relevant to both the training of psychologists and counsellors as they have influenced the development of training programmes in both fields quite extensively (Haring-Hadore & Vacc, 1988). Specific training models for training counselling skills will are discussed, together with models on the pedagogy of counselling training. A discussion on the developmental experiences of counsellors in training concludes this section.

Orientations to the Training of Psychologists: An International Perspective

The training process of psychologists is informed by a variety of factors. These include a specific orientation to training that dictates the structural process as

well as certain theoretical orientations within the programme, which in turn inform the content of that programme.

The Scientist-Practitioner Model

Globally, the development of psychology as a profession reached a turning point in 1949 with the Boulder Conference in America, which dealt mainly with the training of clinical psychologists (Aspenson & Gersh, 1993; Benishek, 1998; Stoltenberg, Pace, Kashubeck-West, Biever, Patterson & Welsch, 2000). During this conference it was recommended that training programmes be structured according to a scientist-practitioner model, in which research and application of theory would be equally important. The underlying philosophy of this model is the combination of the acquisition of psychological understanding with the attitude of constant enquiry towards this knowledge (Shakow, 1976). This implied that students would be trained in principles based on scientific research and observation as well as the ability to facilitate a sensitive and humanistic approach to the problems people face. These skills would then be analysed through extensive supervision (Parker, 1986).

The scientist-practitioner model therefore aims to train students to identify problems, gather relevant data, formulate hypotheses and test these in a systematic manner (Stoltenberg et al., 2000). Supporters of the scientist-practitioner model states that the scientist role is as important in a clinical setting as it would be in a research setting – implying that it would safeguard trainees against accepting idiosyncratic experiences of individuals as generalisable fact. Although the intent of this model is therefore to train students in both clinical and research practice, the integration of these skills has been the subject of considerable debate (Apenson & Gersh, 1993); and although this paradigm remains the most popular for training model for counselling psychology (Benishek, 1998; Haring-Hidore & Vacc, 1988; Raimy, 1950), trainers and educators continue to struggle with the application of this concept in practical training settings.

The scientist-practitioner model is important as it has influenced the training of clinical psychologists in North America, and to a lesser extent, in the rest of the world (Stoltenberg et al., 2000). This model was also accepted within the counselling psychology field and reflected a commitment to a training model that was based on

scientific values. The training guidelines that were developed in the United States of America and that were guided by this model can be set out as follows:

- The training of psychologists shall take place in university departments.

- Psychologists should be trained as psychologists first and then as clinicians.

- Trainees shall be required to do an internship within a host setting that is accredited by a Professional Board of Psychology.

- Trainees shall receive training which will allow them to achieve a level of competence in three areas, namely, diagnosis, psychotherapy and research.

For almost ten years, this orientation remained unchallenged as the leading training model for psychologists. Derner's (1959) and McConnell's (1984) arguments against the scientist-practitioner model summarise the main concerns over the limitations of this training model, stating that the advancement of psychology as a science and as a profession through predominantly scientific endeavours negated the alleviation of personal suffering and the development of professional aspects of training.

The Professional-Practitioner Model

During the Vail conference (Korman, 1973), the professional-practitioner model was suggested as an alternative training model to the scientist-practitioner model, and was to some extent accepted by clinical psychologists. However, counselling psychologists resisted adopting the practitioner model, and the American Psychological Association accredited two practitioner model counselling psychology programmes only in 1995. The practitioner model did not prescribe any particular ideology or training strategy, but rather suggested that each individual programme should use the available resources to the greatest effect (Parker, 1986). A few guidelines were, however, offered:

- Field training in various contexts should be emphasised with an aim of integrating experience with learned skills.

- Training should be congruent with the needs of clients in a given community.

- Services for underserved populations should be provided as part of training programmes.

If the above guidelines are taken into account, it is clear that the professional-practitioner model differs from the scientist-practitioner model in number of ways – an emphasis is placed on service; no pure ideology of training is given; and the context in which training took place is taken into consideration. A further very important and relevant point that was made at the Vail conference was that three specific levels of training in psychology were identified – doctoral level training, Master's level training and training at Bachelor's level and below (Parker, 1986).

This last level of training is of particular relevance to this study as it was felt that students with a general training and skills in the field of human relations and mental health could contribute significantly in the field of psychological services in respond to the social and community demands.

The Training of Psychologists: A South African Perspective

The scientist-practitioner model of training is generally adopted in South Africa, with the current training programmes in Master's degrees in clinical, counselling, educational and industrial psychology being structured around the combination of academic, practical and research training (Van der Westhuizen & Plug, 1987). There are currently 17 universities in South Africa that offer training for psychologists (www.studysa.co.za/uni.html). The application of this system of training in South Africa includes a first year of postgraduate training in which a combination of academic and practical training is undertaken. The second year of training consists of a twelve-month internship at an accredited institution such as a hospital, rehabilitation centre or counselling service. After the completion of a research dissertation that must be undertaken in the discipline of training (counselling or clinical), students then have to complete a community service year in order to qualify for registration with the Professional Board of Psychology (Parker, 1986). The practical application of this orientation is outlined in the following section on the training of clinical psychologists at the University of Pretoria.

The Master's degree in Clinical Psychology at the University of Pretoria is based on the scientist-practitioner model with an emphasis on both the theoretical as well as the practical training. Although the students are primarily trained as clinicians, they must also be able to analyse theoretical contents critically and use these theoretical principles as a solid basis for their clinical work. The main vision of the

programme is to produce competent, professional clinical psychologists who will be able to work in a variety of therapeutic settings and contexts and provide a service to the larger South African community, sensitive to the developing needs of this country. The mission of the programme is consequently to provide a varied training context which will impart to students the appropriate therapeutic attitudes and skills required to serve South African communities.

The training model follows a specific progression from basic therapeutic skills, where the emphasis lies more on work with the individual, to more complex systems such as couples and families, as well as groups and eventually the larger organisational context of the internship institution. The first four weeks of training are very intensive and aim to provide students with basic skills so that they may begin interviewing and assessing clients for their practical work. They are given an introduction to psychotherapy and clinical psychology which in part focuses on person-centred therapy, thereby allowing students to develop the necessary attitude and skills required in a therapeutic relationship.

The second block introduces psychodynamic therapy as well as interactional psychotherapy, based on the Palo Alto school of thought. Community psychology is also included, and focuses first on the theoretical concepts underlying the field. Students are later required to carry out a number of practical projects in different community settings. Throughout the year students are required to do practical work at different institutions. Upon completion of the first year, students then embark on a year-long internship. During the internship year students keep in contact with the University by way of supervision both for the mini-thesis that has to be completed as part of the degree, as well as case supervision (M. Marchetti-Mercer, personal communication, February 10, 2004).

As it falls outside the scope of this study to write a story on the various models of training for *psychologists* that have developed within the scientist-practitioner model, the following section discusses the training of *counsellors* in terms of orientation and models of professional and personal development. Professional development includes the training of specific counselling skills as well as the pedagogy for the training of counselling skills. Personal development includes developmental experiences of counsellors as set out in various developmental models.

The Training of Counsellors: An International Perspective

Internationally, the scientist-practitioner orientation remains the training model of choice for counselling and other applied areas of psychology (Haring-Hidore & Vacc, 1988; Stoltenberg et al., 2000). Since I have already discussed this orientation in the previous section, I will progress to a consideration of the issues surrounding the orientation of training programmes for counsellors in the South African context, and specifically the BPsych programme at the University of Pretoria.

The Training of Counsellors: A South African Perspective

Van Schalkwyk, Kokot-Louw and Pauw (2002) state that the existing training of psychologists (with reference to the scientist-practitioner orientation as well models for skills acquisition) in South Africa does not provide an appropriate framework for the training of counsellors in short-term interventions and community-based work as required from registered counsellors. They further state that the primary and preventative work of counsellors requires a shift towards more community-based work and hands-on training, and that this alternative focus for training poses a number of challenges which include (1) developing a relevant theoretical framework, (2) finding an appropriate model that provides a sound psychological epistemology and (3) organising a suitable curriculum that provides the scope and content for scientifically sound learning. These authors also state that registered counsellors differ from other primary health care professionals in that they should be psychologically minded – meaning that the counsellor should not only focus on content, but also be able to read and interpret process. To be able to read process, it is important to develop the skill of self-reflection within a certain body of theoretical knowledge (Van Schalkwyk et al., 2002).

The development of the orientation and structure of the training programme was therefore grounded in the ways that the University of Pretoria, through the Department of Psychology, conceptualised the purpose and outcomes of the BPsych Programme. The structure of the four-year undergraduate programme in psychology consists of two sections. The first two years comprises general training in psychology – aiming at equipping students with a knowledge base that is broad enough to understand the complexity of human behaviour. In the third and fourth year, fundamental modules on programme development, ethics and society, diversity and

change are introduced. Fundamental modules are aimed at facilitating a sound scientific approach and core modules include adult psychopathology, community psychology, basic interviewing skills, structured intervention skills and psychological assessment. Both fundamental and core modules are compulsory for all students and are regarded as representative of the core disciplines in psychology. The elective modules include, for example, general theoretical orientations, learning problems, social and developmental psychology, neurological psychology, sport psychology, and child psychology. Elective modules relate to a particular context of application and aim to equip the students with skills applicable to specific client populations. Depending on the particular combination of modules taken, students will be able to practice in a specific context of application. Training is therefore provided in a specific context of application and students have to select one of these contexts when commencing with the third year of study.

In a specific context, advanced skills training is offered to enable students to apply their knowledge and competencies in a specific focus area. These focus areas are inclusive and competencies include the ability to observe, screen and refer potential clients appropriately. The following contexts of application are offered:

- Child and school context
- Community mental health context
- Psychometry
- Sport psychology context (Van Schalkwyk et al., 2002)

After the completion of the theoretical part of the course, a six-month internship (called a learnership) is required before the student can register with the HPCSA.

The Purpose of the BPsych Qualification

The BPsych programme was introduced in 2001 with an intake of 54 students. This qualification enables students to obtain in-depth knowledge of the major principles and theories in psychology so that they have the opportunity to incorporate a broad knowledge base that will facilitate their understanding of human behaviour (Van Schalkwyk et al., 2002). Qualifying students will be able to register with the HPCSA as Psychological Counsellors, and depending on the particular combination

of modules taken, qualifying students will be able to practice in the fields of mental health, educational psychology, industrial and organisational psychology or sport psychology.

Qualifying students will further be able to understand and apply the principles on which decisions are made for the performance of formalised, structured and short-term interventions at the primary, curative/preventative level, and to design and manage subsystems of intervention programmes and processes. This will ensure a steady supply of qualified practitioners capable of delivering psychological services to the broad and diverse range of contexts in South Africa.

Specific Outcomes for this Qualification Relevant to this Study

Psychological Assessment. BPsych graduates are competent to administer and score formal and informal assessment instruments and techniques, to write reports requiring interpretations of psychological functions and to identify symptoms for referral as well as utilising assessment information in other practical contexts.

Psychological Interventions. BPsych graduates are competent to provide, at the level of subsystems, basic, short-term, supportive counselling; to design, plan and implement basic psychoeducation and training; and to design, plan and implement programmes aimed at the promotion of primary psychosocial well-being in different practical contexts.

Professional Ethics and Practice. BPsych graduates are aware of the need to act professionally and ethically, and to perform psychological acts only within the ambit of their accredited competence.

Lifelong Learning. BPsych graduates show self-directed work and learning and understand the requirement to keep abreast of developments in the discipline and profession. They are aware that they will be required to demonstrate this through obtaining credits for continuing education as specified by the Professional Board of Psychology to retain their licensing.

In order to respond to Van Schalkwyk et al.'s (2002) challenge that an alternative focus for training should include the development of a relevant theoretical framework, and to find an appropriate model that provides a sound psychological

epistemology, I explored the literature stories about the professional and personal development of counsellors.

The Professional and Personal Development of Counsellors

The personal and professional development of psychologists and counsellors within a specific training model are concepts that are widely used in the literature on the training of therapists and counsellors (Dryden & Feltham, 1994; Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992; Wilkins, 1997). The professional development of counsellors is sometimes conceptualised as the area which addresses the acquisition of counselling skills and knowledge. Personal development is conceptualised as attending to one's personal needs as a counsellor in such a way that it increases counsellors' ability to be present and effective in counselling (Wilkins, 1997).

During the past twenty years there has also been a growing interest in the general development of the counsellor. Guy (1987) states that this may be due to an increasing awareness that the personal and professional aspects of counsellors' functioning are intertwined, and that both are vital to proper functioning. Nonetheless, the bulk of the available literature on the professional and personal development of counsellors is divided into discussions on models of counselling skills training and models of counsellor development. As I am concerned here with the public narrative of the literature, I will adhere to this distinction, first discussing the models of counselling skills training as well as the pedagogy relevant to the training of counselling skills, and then attending to models of counsellor development.

Models for Counselling Skills Training: An International Perspective

Discussions about the effectiveness of approaches to counselling skills training go back at least fifty years when training methods were largely based on the supervision model. In this model, a significant part of the training consists of the trainee being in counselling with the trainer/supervisor (Wiseman, 1998). This approach has been evaluated as largely ineffective (Daniels, 1994; Matarazzo, Wiens & Saslow, 1966). Rogers (1957) notes that counsellor training was usually conducted in a haphazard way, and in response offered guidelines for training that included audiotapes and observation through a one-way mirror. His contribution is largely credited with ushering counsellor training into a new era. Based on his contributions,

a number of systematic approaches to counsellor training emerged in the 1960s. Three major approaches that were widely used and researched are the Human Relations Development (Truax & Carkhuff, 1967), Micro Training (Ivey, Normington, Miller, Morrill & Haase, 1968) and Interpersonal Process Recall (Kagan, 1984).

In 1994, Daniels wrote a paper on the assessment of these three major training systems by focusing on published reviews of counsellor training. In his report he states that micro-training is a systemic training programme based on the principles of social learning theory where the students learn the basic micro skills of communication step by step. Interpersonal process recall training tends to focus less on the basic skills and more on the students' feelings and thoughts about their performance during role plays. It is based in part on the assumption that students in the beginning stages of counselling training often fail to attend to important aspects of the counselling conversations because they have performance anxiety. In recent years, micro counselling and interpersonal process recall have been used in tandem. In contrast, the Human Relations Development model has two components, one didactic and one experiential. The students receive information on the therapeutic model during the didactical phase, while the experiential phase is partly a therapeutic process in which students experience the facilitative conditions to grow towards self-actualisation.

From his assessment, Daniels (1994) concludes that all three training systems have made contributions to training counsellors. He adds that research offers evidence of the effectiveness of all these programmes, but does not support the superiority of one model over any other. Daniels's (1994) research confirms a study by Kasdorf and Gustafson (1978), which indicates that the combination of these training programmes is particularly effective.

In the last ten years, in addition to the focus on skills training, there has also been an expressed interest in the pedagogy of counselling training. In 1998, Nelson and Neufeldt conducted a survey on the literature on the pedagogy of counselling. They found articles on training in counselling skills, case conceptualisation, personal and interpersonal awareness, ethics theory and research. Most of the articles they found also proposed certain training models that would develop students' abilities in these domains, but few addressed the process of the training in these abilities.

This was an important turn in the conversation on models of counselling training. At last, not only were the orientation and model for skills training viewed as important aspects, but the process through which the training material was given to the students was also regarded as an important aspect that needed to be explored. Mahoney (1986) and Winslade, Monk and Drewery (1997) have criticised the field of counselling training for placing too strong an emphasis on technique and skills training, while neglecting other important aspects such as relationship quality and the person of the counsellor. Critiques on skills training therefore raise the concern that students must not only develop skills and techniques, but also their humanness in the process of becoming competent counsellors. This concern for the importance of the counsellor's relationship capacities in client welfare has led counsellor trainers to integrate intra- and interpersonal awareness training into their programmes (Nelson & Neufeldt, 1998).

Other objections to traditional methods of training of students in counselling programmes concern the fact that these methods offer few opportunities for students to question traditional theories or propose new ways of thinking about them. Trainers in the marriage and family therapy arena have challenged trainers of counselling programmes to change their approaches to accommodate the cultural context in which they locate their understanding of individuals and groups. Smith (1993) points out how constructivist and feminist perspectives on theory and training are challenging our assumptions about the role of the therapist in therapy. He stated that the postmodern assumption that the truth is a product of culturally created ideas has made the traditional counsellor-as-expert role inappropriate, and that this must be reflected in the training of students in order to facilitate the development of a more collaborative role as counsellor.

Flowing from these challenges to traditional conceptualisations of training, research on the underlying assumptions of the training methods used in counselling curricula has focused on the pedagogy of counselling; in other words, not *what* we teach the students, but *how* we teach them (Granello & Hazler, 1998; Nelson & Neufeldt, 1998). Granello and Hazler (1998) suggest that contextual training and learning could provide an important educational tool that can be applied to counsellor education. They also note that there has been a longstanding focus on the content of training programmes but that there has been very little discussion on how to convey

this information. Nelson & Neufeldt (1998) add that many of the traditional methods of training are not applicable to diverse and multicultural communities of students. They suggest that constructivism, social cognitive models and contextual training and learning are all models that encourage training that is connected to the context outside the classroom, with their focus on the social nature of learning and the shared nature of knowledge.

Models for Counselling Skills Training: A South African Perspective

As the training of registered counsellors at tertiary institutions in South Africa only commenced in 2001, it is important to explore the training of lay counsellors prior to 2001. Life Line is a South African organisation that has been training lay counsellors longer than any other lay counselling body. I therefore approached them to gather more information on their training history and philosophy. They were also selected as they train predominantly non-professional people as counsellors, whereas other organisations prefer to train already qualified social workers and psychologists.

Life Line

The following information was obtained in a conversation with the director of Life Line, Hanli van der Vyfer, on 25 March 2004. Life Line started in Australia in 1963, after a superintendent of the Central Methodist Church in Australia became aware of how many people were in need of counselling. In 1968 they opened offices in Cape Town and in 1969 Life Line started training telephone counsellors. Life Line offers a confidential counselling service to any individual who is in need or in an emotional crisis. The service is provided by trained lay counsellors who are skilled in the art of listening. They are committed to giving emotional support either telephonically or through face-to-face sessions (Annual report, 2002/2003). Since 1969, the focus of counselling has gradually shifted from mainly telephonic counselling to more face-to-face sessions, especially when conducting trauma and rape counselling.

Training. Lay counsellors at Life Line are trained through two courses. The first, the Personal Growth course, is open to the public, with the exception of individuals who have experienced trauma in the past six months. The training

programme consists of nine sessions of three hours each, which are conducted twice a week.

The content of the Personal Growth course focuses on becoming more self-aware through developing self-knowledge. This process is facilitated through sharing personal information, developing trust in the training group and maintaining confidential relationships. On completion of this course, there is an informal screening process of students for the follow-up course in counselling. Students who are identified as needing more time to work through their own personal issues are referred to Life Line counsellors for counselling and advised to do reapply to the counselling course at a later stage.

The counselling course consists of eight sessions of three hours each, twice a week. It focuses mostly on the development of counselling skills and the training is largely based on role plays. The first 45 minutes are used to introduce the students to Rogers' theory on counselling. The role plays are done in groups of three and sometimes reflective teams are used to give feedback to the students. The trainers model the therapeutic attitude of warmth, empathy and congruence that Rogers describes during their interaction with students and in the training process.

After the completion of the counselling course, students must go through a selection process. During the selection process, the students' skills as well as the fit between them and the organisational structure are assessed before they are allowed to participate as an active Life Line counsellor.

Selection Process. A selection panel which consists of Life Line personnel as well as professional people from other organisations is convened for the selection process. First, the applicants complete a questionnaire which assesses their self- and theoretical knowledge. The second stage consists of a telephone counselling role play and a face-to-face counselling session that is observed by the panel. The third stage is a panel interview where the applicant's theoretical knowledge as well as skills and commitments are evaluated.

The successful applicants must then complete a four-session orientation programme that includes administrative training and more specific training on rape and HIV/AIDS counselling. On completion of the orientation programme, they enter into a six-month probation period during which they attend a supervision group once a

month, and receive continuous monitoring on sessions and reports during the first four months.

Counselling Skills Training Within the BPsych Programme at the University of Pretoria

In all counsellor training programmes, a course or module exists that focuses specifically on the training of counselling skills. This is also the case with the BPsych programme at the University of Pretoria. This programme consists of modules that are both theoretical and practical. The practical training of students in counselling skills is a year module that the yearbook of the University of Pretoria entitles Structured Counselling. This name was chosen in light of the perceived nature of the services that graduates would offer in the community after completing the qualification.

From the discussions on the training of psychologists and counsellors in South Africa, there is no doubt that training programmes which focus on counselling skills training for counsellors need to be transformed in order to meet the diverse needs of South Africa communities (Els & Schoeman, 2000). It is furthermore necessary to promote counsellors' abilities to adapt to changing situations, and develop self-knowledge and a diversity of skills (Frankel, 1997). Aponte (1994) agrees that the training of counsellors should enable them to be open to themselves and experience vulnerability, discipline and freedom within a relationship. Weingarten (1993) summarises this when she says that "the most important resource of all is the counsellors' awareness of her own feelings and ideas, biases and reactions…. Without this fully explored resource, counsellors are critically constrained from doing work with others is as effective way as possible" (p.374).

Narrative Counselling in the South African Context

In Chapter 1 I have indicated the reasons why postmodern and social constructionist perspectives on counselling are viewed as appropriate counselling models for counsellors to work in a South African context. As a therapeutic model that is situated in a social constructionist framework, narrative counselling holds obvious advantages on both a theoretical and practical level for situating psychological counselling as a contextual and relevant service for communities in the postmodern era. It provides a theoretical approach that is at the forefront of

developments in the social sciences and represents a narrative ethic around the question of "who speaks", which highlights the political problem of speaking for others. It also makes use of knowledge that is accessible to everyone as the knowledge is co-constructed in the counselling conversations and is therefore familiar to the person in counselling.

Models for Personal Development of Counsellors: An International Perspective

Various models have been developed to describe the personal development of counsellors. I have decided to discuss Hogan's (1964) model and Stoltenberg and Delworth's (1987) integrated developmental model. Hogan's model has been highly influential within the area of counsellor development, while the integrated developmental model provides a useful integration of the models of Hogan (1964), Stoltenberg (1981) and Loganbill, Hardy and Delworth (1982).

According to Hogan's model, there are four levels of development in the process of becoming a counsellor. During level one, counsellors are perceived as insecure and dependent. They have little insight into their own motivation for becoming a counsellor, although they are highly motivated for their work, and learn through imitation. Level two sees counsellors struggling with a dependency versus autonomy conflict. In their quest to find their own adaptation, they vacillate between feeling overconfident and feeling overwhelmed. Their motivation tends to fluctuate during this phase. At level three, counsellors experience conditional dependency because of their heightened professional self-confidence and greater insight into their motivations for becoming a counsellor. The themes at level four include personal autonomy and a higher level of insight into their own motivation, which has stabilised. They also have a greater sense of personal security at this level and a recognised need to confront personal and professional issues.

Stoltenberg and Delworth's (1987) integrated developmental model also describes four levels of development. According to this model, development takes place in terms of three basic structures: (1) self and other awareness, (2) motivation and (3) autonomy through various domains of functioning relevant to professional activities in counselling (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992). During level one counsellors are required to master new skills and require opportunities to put knowledge and skills to practice. There is often an overcritical stance towards the self instead of developing

an insightful self understanding. The level one counsellor is often highly motivated to overcome feelings of uncertainty, confusion and anxiety and has a strong desire to become a fully fledged counsellor.

Themes in level two include a shift away from a self-preoccupation to a focus on the client. This change adds complexity and the counsellor might be overwhelmed by the counselling process. The focus on the client also leads to the development of empathy for the client, resulting in a danger of becoming enmeshed with the clients' feelings. During level three, a more stable, autonomous and reflective counsellor develops, with a personalised approach to practice and a greater use and understanding of the self. The counsellor is able to use the self in the counselling process because of better self-knowledge. There is a more stable and higher level of motivation for professional development and practice as the counsellor develops an idiosyncratic counselling style. The process concludes with reaching the stage of "integrated counsellor" on level four.

Concluding Remarks

The structure that I used to position the stories of the literature on the training of counsellors developed in the reading and the writing of this story. I am aware that this is obviously not the only way to conceptualise the literature story, but it is a structure that allowed me to see the fragmented side of some of the training models that exist. In moving between students' stories and literature stories, where private narratives inform the choice of public narratives (Lawler, 2002), the focus on the fragmented nature of literature stories allows a juxtaposition between public and private narratives that is an important aspect in the presentation of qualitative text (Chenail, 1995).

Five Students' Stories

The following section provides the reader with the verbatim entries and story grids of the journals of five students. After presenting the story grids, I introduce the narrative themes and patterns that emerged from the analyses of all the students' texts to the audience, integrated with the literature.

Participant: "Challenge" - Journal

15 February	What is in a story? Strange how we feel the urge to label everything. We spend ages creating arbitrary categories. This paradigm (social constructionism) gives us the power to construct our own realities. I am human. I can't cope with a world that has no answers. We need some assumptions. If it isn't broke, don't fix it. I should not be so defensive about this approach. It is not the approach that makes my assumptions useless. It is I myself that uses this paradigm. We are not asked to leave all our assumptions behind.
22 February	Questioning yourself can be serious. It is like going from a good therapy session and after the session you feel tired and drained. I am scared of the domino effect changing my assumptions could have. Where do you stop and say enough before it is nihilistic. Deconstruction seems so innocent. Merely taking what is there and unpacking. Why should it build such resistance in me? I suppose there is a reason for some things to be packed away in the bottom drawer.
1 March	What about incest? I was bugged with the whole creating a story through society. I need to know where the moral high ground is, what about reporting abuse. With all this unpacking I am seeing that many assumptions are unhealthy. I need to try and walk a mile in a narrative therapist's shoes. I like cognition, it is safe. A narrative therapist is like the artist of psychologists. At first it seems laissez faire, taking the path of least resistance. Actually it is not that easy. It is hard to walk into a session with just yourself. Talk about knowing and being comfortable with yourself. It asks of you to be truly human in a session. Do I trust me enough? Is knowledge and theory my defence or is it that I like it for being clear-cut? I am going to try this approach. Wow, what a success. I was scared as a child in the deep end of a swimming pool. I went with the client. Not manipulating events to the correct outcome.
8 March	It is amazing how entrenched you can become in a way of thinking. In class today I was quick to grasp the concept of externalisation and to see the utility of this type of therapy. Grasping the concept is easy, but trying to think and look and listen that way is nearly impossible. I kept fumbling and eventually just shut up realising that even the most innocent questions are laden with our ideas of internal locus of control. I like to feel like a free and individual thinker. I realised how these assumptions were influencing me. But how do you live without assumptions?
12 April	Deconstruction is difficult because the problems that we discuss are so close to home. It is difficult not to apply the work to my personal life.

16 August	The ending of the course is like saying goodbye to a good friend. With our feedback today it seemed that everybody gained something from the course. I was amazed at how much we have grown. I really think the course has contributed to our growth as therapists.

Story Grid: "Challenge"

Past experiences	She has created so many categories and assumptions to live by and this has become entrenched in her own life.
Present experiences	It feels as if she has to defend her assumptions, but she realises that this is not what the course asks. Deconstruction scares her because of the domino effect it might have. She feels that she is only human and that she needs to have some assumptions. She also wonders whether she trusts herself enough to go into counselling with only herself and her theories. She can see that knowledge is her defence. She likes cognition because it is safe. She needs to know where the moral high ground is.
Future intentions	In the end it was like saying goodbye to a good friend. She could see that everybody has grown as counsellor.

Past Experiences

Challenge could write about her becoming aware of her own assumptions and how much a part of her life these assumptions have become. This creates the context for the rest of her story as it unfolds in her experience during the module.

> It is amazing how entrenched you can become in a way of thinking… I kept fumbling and eventually just shut up realising that even the most innocent questions are laden with our ideas of internal locus of control. I like to feel like a free and individual thinker. I realised how these assumptions were influencing me. But how do you live without assumptions?

Present Experiences

Challenge starts out by saying that she feels a need to defend her assumptions when she is in the class. She writes about knowledge being her safe defence and that she is scared of letting her assumptions fall one by one, because she thinks having assumptions is part of being human. She writes:

Questioning yourself can be serious. It is like going from a good counselling session and after the session you feel tired and drained. I am scared of the domino effect changing my assumptions could have. Where do you stop and say enough before it is nihilistic. Deconstruction seems so innocent. Merely taking what is there and unpacking. Why should it build such resistance in me? I suppose there is a reason for some things to be packed away in the bottom drawer.

 This conflict within herself is clarified in her story about trusting herself enough to go into a counselling situation with only herself. She writes this about it:

A narrative therapist is like the artist of psychologists. At first it seems laissez faire, taking the path of least resistance. Actually it is not that easy. It is hard to walk into as session with must yourself. Talk about knowing and being comfortable with yourself. It asks of you to be truly human in as session. Do I trust me enough? Is knowledge and theory my defence or is it that I like it for being clear-cut?

Future Intentions

Challenge becomes more comfortable in this approach to life and counselling and is willing to try out this new approach as a counsellor.

I am going to try this approach. Wow, what a success. I was scared as a child in the deep end of a swimming pool but I went with the client and did not manipulate events to the correct outcome.

Narrative Core

Challenge's journal tells a story of being afraid that the knowledge that made her feel safe and competent as a counsellor and as a person is not only being challenged, but is also being taken away from her. When she reflects on this, she becomes aware of the fact that knowledge and assumptions acted as a defence for her as a therapist. This leads to a questioning of herself – does she trust herself to be enough as a therapist without knowledge and assumptions? In her experience of being a narrative therapist, however, she gains confidence in herself and her story ends where she is saying goodbye to the module as if it was an old friend.

Participant: "A-Thought-Provoking-Alternative" - Journal

15 February	During class discussion I found myself recognising some of my more dominant stories. I was also astonished and a bit confused by the magnitude of stories I have in my life.
22 February	Thin descriptions lead to thin conclusions. This was the most important theme for me in this chapter. How often have I not made this mistake and how often have I not suffered because of thin conclusions which others have made about me. This is such a frame of mind especially when looking at diagnosis, that I find it a daily challenge not to fall into that trap. Narrative therapy brings to forth thickened alternative stories that do not support or sustain problems.
1 March	The problem is the problem, as opposed to seeing the person as the problem. Externalising conversations are ways of speaking that separate the problems from people. Although we were told to see this not as a technique but as an attitude, I find this immensely difficult.
2 August	Remembering conversations involve people deliberately choosing who they would like to have present as active participants of their new alternative stories, and whose participations they would prefer to revise or revoke. This process also makes memories and histories of connections more available and plays a significant part in the re-authoring of stories. It was interesting to think about all the people in my life after this chapter. I was more able to see the various roles they play and their influences, negative or positive on my life story.

Story Grid: "A-Thought-Provoking-Alternative"

Past experiences	None
Present experiences	She recognises her own dominant stories. She is astonished at the magnitude of stories she has in her life. She suffers al lot from thin descriptions. She finds it a daily challenge not to fall into the trap of making a diagnosis based on a thin description. She finds it difficult not to use externalising as a technique, but as a attitude. She can see how the other people in her life participate in creating her story.
Future intentions	None

Past Experiences

During her journal writing, A-Thought-Provoking-Alternative never refers to past experiences, but remains in the present as she writes about the classes that she attended.

Present Experiences

This student writes continuously about the large number of dominant stories in her life, and that most of them only offer thin descriptions of who she is. In her process during the year she can reflect on the fact that she struggles not to "thinly describe" other people through diagnosing them. These difficulties are also supported by the fact that she struggles to use externalising language. She says:

> How often have I not made this mistake and how often have I not suffered because of thin conclusions which others have made about me. This is such a frame of mind especially when looking at diagnosis, that I find it a daily challenge not to fall into that trap. Narrative counselling brings to forth thickened alternative stories that do not support or sustain problems.

Future Intentions

Again, no journal entries of this student referred to the future. It seemed as is she was immersed in the present, struggling to resist the internalised dominant stories in her own and her clients' lives, which could possibly have made it difficult for her to see that it could become different in the future.

Narrative Core

A-Thought-Provoking-Alternative's process throughout the year centres on her awareness of the effect of thin descriptions such as making a diagnosis. However, her awareness does not always help her in her own struggle to resist these languaging practices in her own life as well as in her life as a counsellor.

Participant: "Snooky" - Journal

15 February	During the first sessions, the rest of the course and the process were introduced. For me as an individual, a first class can make or break class as the whether I will enjoy it or not. I enjoyed this class and am looking forward to the rest of the year. A point that stood out for me was the power that was bestowed on the client. It seemed that the client was more in charge of the

	therapy than the therapist.
22 February	Social constructionism was the topic in class and was something that I believe made everyone think. The exercise that we had to do as excellent and mind altering. I never knew that so few questions could cause light bulb moments.
1 March	Thick and thin descriptions were the class topic. What was interesting to me was also the move from absolute truth to contextual truth. During the practical session I discovered that it was not as easy as I had thought it to be. This practical session helped me a lot in the knowledge that it gave to me but it also showed me that people get stuck in conversations because of one aspect and that I need to listen to every aspect that is being communicated.
8 March	The externalisation and tracing the history is both exciting and scary. My reason for this is that everything is starting to make sense now and therefore I am nervous about doing the whole process.
19 April	Deconstruction was the topic so far. I believe change is not an easy process and if it can occur, then the situations around it need to be of such a nature that they make it easier.
19 July	We marked our own tests today. This was quite an experience, as it has never happened before. It was however an enriching experience as it was empowering and at the same time nerve wrecking as we had to take the responsibility of marking correctly. This whole exercise fitted so perfectly with the narrative therapy in that it was causing a change by placing every one just outside their comfort zone and the empowering them by giving them the decision on what mark to give themselves.
16 August	This course has and still is having many implications on my life as an individual. There is however one implication that stands out above their rest and was part of every class in structured counselling. Structured counselling first gave me a slap in the face by waking me up to the realty that everyone has some social constructs. After this "ego bubble burst", structured counselling held me tight and climbed into my heart because no one is perfect but as long as the try, half the battle is won. I am trying and always will.

Story Grid: "Snooky"

Past experiences	She thought that the therapist would be in charge in counselling.
Present experiences	She realises that the client will be in charge of the counselling process. She never knew that so few questions could have so many light bulb moments as she finds the exercise excellent and mind altering. She needs to listen very carefully to situate truth in context and to move from absolute truth to contextual truth.

	She becomes nervous to do the whole process.
	When they mark their own tests, she feels that it fits with the course to take responsibility for their marks and work.
	She feels that this has contained her throughout her learning experience so that she could make mistakes.
Future intentions	The course still has many implications in her life.

Past Experiences

The student comes to class with the expectation that the therapist will be in charge of the counselling process. She also has a narrative on modules that consist of a theme of "the first class makes or breaks a course".

Present Experiences

In her experiences in the module, she comes to two realisations: that the therapist in not in charge of the counselling process and that the right questions can lead to new knowledge. She does, however, realise that putting theory into practice is not that easy as she struggles to move from absolute truths to contextual truths. She writes this:

> What was interesting to me was also the move from absolute truth to contextual truth. During the practical session I discovered that it was not as easy as I had thought it to be. This practical session helped me a lot in the knowledge that it gave to me but it also showed me that people get stuck in conversations because of one aspect and that I need to listen to every aspect that is being communicated.

Future Intentions

In the student's narrative she refers to the fact that the module still has many implications in her life. In her reflection on the module she says:

> This course has and still is having many implications on my life as an individual. There is however one implication that stands out above their rest and was part of every class in structured counselling. Structured counselling first gave me a slap in the face by waking me up to the realty that everyone has some social constructs. After this "ego bubble burst", structured

counselling held me tight and climbed into my heart because no one is perfect but as long as the try, half the battle is won. I am trying and always will.

Narrative Core

Snooky's story is about discovering contextual truths as they are situated within a counselling relationship that is equal, and where the counsellor is not in charge. She does, however, feel safe to explore this discovery as she lets go of the idea of being perfect.

Participant: "The Guide" - Journal

15 February	We had a long and interesting class. We discussed the difference between modernistic and postmodernist approaches to psychology. I was very excited, for the first time, to have the theory make sense to me practically. I enjoy the postmodern perspective because it negates the concept of universal truths, but that truth is created between people and through language. We discussed discourses that we had trouble with in our lives and I immediately thought of the "authority figure" discourse: That made me angry and replaced the usual sadness which was a good thing. The discourse that I must always make others happy stifles me at times. Elizabeth emphasised the role of assumptions during counselling. I realise I have certain assumptions that will influence my counselling. I think my norms are closely tied in with society and Christian rules. It is still surprising to me that not everyone agrees with these values. I realise that this is a very naïve view and I have to work at accepting different viewpoints.
22 February	We were asked today to answer questions about ourselves – I think both as a method of self-reflection and also to practically demonstrate the narrative process. I did not think that answering that questions would be so difficult and I left class excited about what we had been shown.
1 March	First half was theory and the second half was role plays. I was terrified of the role plays, and so volunteered to be part of the reflective teams lest I end up being in the counsellor's or client's chair. I still find myself using vocabulary from a traditional approach despite the fact that I really want to work from a narrative perspective. I suppose it really takes long to change perspectives. I strongly identified with the client and felt strong compassion towards her. Identification with the client really influences me and I wonder what will happen if I had a client that I really did not like?

8 March	During the role play I was first the therapist and then the client. We were in small groups and it was much more personal. I found it easier to be the therapist in the small group. It went well and it really boosted my confidence. I actually learnt a lot about myself in the session that I was the client. It is strange to speak to someone about personal matters and to have others speak about their lives and then just to carry on outside class pretending we did not know about each others hang ups. At least it keeps us on our toes.
15 March	Today's class was disappointing for me. I was very irritated by the person playing the counsellor. She seemed to be leading and bullying the client and the client clammed up until the lecturers intervened. I think I got angry because it is not my idea of client-centred therapy. It did however show me how carefully questions must be framed and how my own vies and opinions could influence the client.
12 April	Today The Coin and I were a client and therapist team. We discussed his relationship with change and mine with being tired. It was not so difficult as it was something that I already worked on quite a bit.

Story Grid: "The Guide"

Past experiences	She has had an "authority figure" discourse in her life which usually makes her sad. She realised that she had many assumptions that influenced her counselling such as Christian values and rules developed by society, and it still amazes her that not everyone believes in Christian values.
Present experiences	During the course she starts to like the idea that there is not one universal truth and that truth is created between people. She is excited about the process of self-reflection through the use of exercises and the narrative process as she is learning a lot about herself. She does however still use the language of traditionalist approaches as it will take time to change. She wonders about what will happen when she does not like her client as she usually strongly identifies with her clients. It is strange for her to talk to other students about personal matters and then leave it in the class room.
Future intentions	Narrative language is becoming easier for her ad she is looking forward to using it in the counselling situation.

Past Experiences

In her story about her experiences before participating in the module, she writes about the discourses and assumptions operating in her life. Despite her

awareness of these discourses, it also amazes her that some people do not share theses value systems and assumptions. She summarises this as follows:

> We discussed discourses that we had trouble with in our lives and I immediately thought of the "authority figure" discourse: That made me angry and replaced the usual sadness which was a good thing. The discourse that I must always make others happy stifles me at times. Elizabeth emphasised the role of assumptions during counselling. I realise I have certain assumptions that will influence my counselling. I think my norms are closely tied in with society and Christian rules. It is still surprising to me that not everyone agrees with these values. I realise that this is a very naïve view and I have to work at accepting different viewpoints.

Present Experiences

The Guide expresses her excitement about the process of self-reflection through the use of the narrative process as she is learning a lot about herself. She could also start seeing that there is not one universal truth and that truth is created between people.

> We were asked today to answer questions about ourselves – I think both as a method of self-reflection and also to practically demonstrate the narrative process. I did not think that answering questions would be so difficult and I left class excited about what we had been shown.

This process is, however, not without difficulties as she sometimes still uses the language of traditionalist approaches.

> I still find myself using vocabulary from a traditional approach despite the fact that I really want to work from a narrative perspective. I suppose it really takes long to change perspectives. I strongly identified with the client and felt strong compassion towards her. Identification with the client really influences me and I wonder what will happen if I had a client that I really did not like?

Future Intentions

In spite of her difficulties in the module, The Guide concludes by saying that it is becoming easier for her to use narrative language and that she looks forward to using the narrative counselling process in counselling situations.

Narrative Core

The Guide's story is one of becoming aware of value systems and discourses of authority functioning in her life and her related efforts during this module to become more open to the constructed nature of reality. However, she struggles to resist this as she adopts a linear rather than relational view in questioning the difference between her and other people and what impact this difference has on her.

Participant: "The Coin" - Journal

15 February	Our introduction to narrative therapy opened a door to a new approach to counselling. Doing practical for the past three months I have been using Roger's theory. Gaining insight into different approaches to counselling I believe will enable me to be a more effective counsellor. We focused on Gergen's view of postmodernism and narrative in therapy. In smaller groups we had to identify cultural discourses and specifically relate it to our experiences. We then observed role plays in which therapy was provided from a narrative approach.
22 February	We did a "I am" exercise. I described myself as caring. I then had to answer eight questions, the last one being "who am I when I am not that person?" This exercise has given me insight into the way I see myself as well as the ability to identify alternative stories.
1 March	In today's lecture we dealt with the basics of narrative therapy. This was followed by role plays and I was part of the reflecting team. I am comfortable with Rogers, but think that narrative has a lot to offer.
8 March	Today's class focused on the externalisation of the problem and the tracing of the history. We also did an exercise in which we analysed our relationship with others and groups and organisations. Afterwards I was the client in role plays and found this extremely valuable as it gave me a new perspective on how a client experiences the counselling process. Overall an enlightening experience.
15 March	I was only part of the reflecting team today and found it at times extremely frustrating. Today's topic was exploring the effects of the problem. I had an opportunity to be the client as well as the therapist in the role plays. By being the therapist I also realised that as a therapist one has control of the process to a certain extent, but the client is however in control of the content.
19 July	Today we were given the task to mark section B of our semester test. Reading over the essay that I wrote, I realised that the effect this module is having on me and how I have had to integrate it with other beliefs and attitudes I hold. This whole transition feels a little forced, but as I learnt today, one doesn't

	grow in one's comfort zone. So let's stretch! Fortunately we have another five lectures for narrative therapy, so I'll have some time to practise. In the past I have avoided being the therapist, but I feel I just got to jump into to and that some practical experience.
26 July	Well today we looked at unique outcomes. I was also part of the reflecting team and we had to relate our process commentary to our own lives. I really do think it is important for us to explore our inner selves, in order to allow for greater insight and understanding about our selves and our behaviour.
2 August	I finally took a chance and decided to be a therapist in the role plays. At first my heart was beating wildly, but I soon felt at ease, as I was totally focused on the client. I was very person centred and reflected how the client was feeling. I felt that the conversation was going in circles. We then stopped and the lecturer said that I could use the metaphor to describe the client's life. I then realised the creative potential of narrative therapy, as well as being a total mind shift. I really think that narrative therapy will be a great tool to have, but making the transition is proving harder that I thought. I however got some good feedback from the lecturer, regarding my style of counselling and she feels it is a good foundation.
16 August	Today we had no lectures or role plays and the whole class had to tell their story of how we experienced this course. Each person got a chance to share his/her experiences as we added to the story. It started when narrative therapy began in 2002 and this related to the fact that it was the first time we were exposed to it. For me personally I enjoyed the fact that we could share our experiences, therefore looking past the therapy and see the impact that this new approach has had on us. For me it has been a roller coaster of emotions as I have been excited, frustrated and relieved.

Story Grid: "The Coin"

Past experiences	He had used Rogers' approach in his practical experience before this course.
Present experiences	Narrative counselling opens a door to a new approach in counselling. He is gaining insight in how he sees himself and realises that this is an important part of the course. He can identify alternative stories for himself. He realises that the client should be in control of the content and the therapist has control over the process, and can experience the client position in counselling through being the client in role plays.
Future intensions	He still feels comfortable with Rogers, but think that narrative counselling has much to offer.

Past Experiences

The Coin begins his story by remembering that his previous counselling experience was influenced by Rogers' approach. He is a trained lay counsellor at Life Line.

Present Experiences

The Coin's process during the module is one of finding an alternative counselling story through narrative counselling. He writes about the fact that he could gain insight into himself and that he became aware of how important self-reflection is. He could also see that the client's and therapist's roles in this relationship differ from other approaches to therapy.

He says:

….afterwards I was the client in role plays and found this extremely valuable as it gave me a new perspective on how a client experiences the counselling process. Overall an enlightening experience.

I had an opportunity to be the client as well as the therapist in the role plays. By being the therapist I also realised that as a therapist one has control of the process to a certain extent, but the client is however in control of the content.

Future Intentions

Although The Coin can see how narrative counselling could work and that it is an approach that has much to offer, he still prefers to work in a Rogerian way.

Narrative Core

The main theme of The Coin's story throughout the year is reflected in the name that the student gave to this module. The coin for him has two sides: Rogers versus narrative counselling. What is important though is that he allowed himself to become part of the module and experience it before coming to the realisation that he still preferred to work according in a Rogerian approach. This process is an important one that emphasises the fact that deconstruction is not to be confused with destruction, which would mean challenging for the sake of challenging. The Coin managed to deconstruct his approach to therapy, which enabled him to be aware of alternative counselling stories.

Duet: Narrative Counselling as Training Model for the Personal and Professional
Development of Counsellors

Introduction

The duet in this chapter is an integration of the themes that crystallised
through the process of analysing the participants' journals and the literature on the
training of counsellors. I hope that this text can serve as an invitation to a
conversation on a more integrated training model for counsellors in South Africa.

In reading the literature, it seemed to me that there were few or no
conversations whose purpose was to align the orientations of training programmes,
the training of counselling skills in terms of content and pedagogy, and the
developmental experiences of counsellors in training. I also found that in my writing
of the story of the literature, I struggled to make sense of the process and to find
interconnections between the abovementioned aspects of training psychologists and
counsellors. There are authors (e.g., Bor & Watts, 1999; Cantwell and Holmes, 1994;
Dryden & Feltham, 1994; Wendorf, 1984) who believe that the theoretical
assumptions in a counselling model should be reflected through the ways of training,
and that the relationship of trainer to student should be isomorphic to the relationship
of therapist to client. However, this does not seem to happen on a practical level. In
this integration, after some introductory comments on the orientation to training, I
attempt to position narrative counselling as a learning context that allows for the
telling of an integrated story on the professional and personal development of
counsellors.

Orientation to Training

The scientist-practitioner model is still the dominant orientation to counselling
training, but has received a fair amount of critique, which focuses mostly on the fact
that the advancement of psychology through scientific avenues negates the alleviation
of personal suffering and the development of professional aspects of training (Derner,
1959; McConnell, 1984). The scientist-practitioner orientation has its grounding in a
modernistic framework. Shakow (1976) states that the philosophy of the scientist-
practitioner model is a combination of the skilled acquisition of reality-based

psychological understanding and the attitude of constant enquiry towards this knowledge, meaning that clinicians are trained in general principles that are based on scientific research and observation rather than focusing on techniques. Supporters of the scientist-practitioner model imply that this way of training offers some sort of guarantee against the generalisation of idiosyncratic experiences to other communities (Stoltenberg et al., 2000).

In 1993, Aspenson and Gersh conducted a study on graduate psychology students' perceptions of the scientist-practitioner model of training. Students who perceived themselves as being clinicians responded negatively towards the model, while students who have previously been exposed to research or wanted to work in a research-orientated setting, were positive about this approach. Although there are limitations to this study, such as the size of the sample group (24) and the fact that the students were all drawn from one residential university, it seems that a training programme which focuses on the development of applied counselling and assessment skills should consider other options before adopting a scientist-practitioner orientation.

As a response to the scientist-practitioner model, the professional-practitioner model was developed ten years later, but few counselling programmes have adopted this orientation. This model has a very strong service delivery focus, it does not prescribe any clear training ideology and it recommends that the context in which the training occurs should inform the training content and process. In other words, the needs of the clients within a given community need to be addressed and the training should be congruent with these needs (Parker, 1986). This orientation is much more compatible with postmodern and social constructionist ideas surrounding education as it encourages dialogue and collaboration between different communities such as the academic and social communities. In encouraging dialogue, the knowledge and expertise in the social community is valued, which challenges the hierarchical position of the university towards the community it serves, the hierarchy between trainers and students, and between counsellors and clients. However, in 1998, when a model training programme for the training of counselling psychologists was developed by Murdock et al., the scientist-practitioner model was again chosen as the main orientation.

If trainers wish to situate a training programme in a social constructionist orientation to training, it is important to find ways of acknowledging the social constructionist questioning of knowledge as scientific end-product and to find ways of communicating to students the idea that knowledge can also be seen as a social constructed product, a product that cannot easily be understood without the context in which it has its origins. Such an orientation should also work towards honouring the anti-essentialist approach situated in a social constructionist philosophy that values the difference between people, the unique qualities of individuals and the fact that it is difficult to know people without taking into account the context in which they exist. This orientation would then impact on the structuring of the training situation as well as on the content and pedagogy of training.

If we look at the structuring of the BPsych programme at the University of Pretoria, which entails four years of theoretical training, together with extensive practical work from the third year onwards and an internship of six months at a practical placement setting, it is clear to see the influence of the scientist-practitioner model in this module. A theoretical module with an add-on internship is one of the accepted ways of balancing theoretical and practical components in programmes that adopt the scientist-practitioner orientation.

In structuring the four hours per week that we spent together in the classroom, the students and I initially also used a mini-scientist-practitioner model to structure the time. As such, the first 45 minutes would be spent on introducing students to the theoretical principles of postmodernism, social constructionism and narrative counselling and we would then spend the remaining three hours doing practical work in role play format. We also used the basic principle of the Human Relations Development Model (Truax & Carkhuff, 1967), where the experiential part of the training is viewed as a therapeutic process. This structure was flexible, however, and was open to change as the students and trainer could communicate their needs within the repositioned relationships. The contextual model of teaching and learning (Granello & Haag, 2000) also supports the facilitation of counsellors' awareness of the socially situated nature of knowledge.

I would also like to elaborate further on how a social constructionist orientation to training can create a context for the integration of the training of counselling skills with the personal and professional development of counsellors. At

this point I would prefer to re-language counselling skills training in this context and rather call this "becoming a narrative counsellor". I think that "counselling skills training" is more open to modernist interpretations of obtaining skills that are applied in a counselling context, much like getting the right tools to fix something that is broken. Language practices such as these are more vulnerable to the definition of the counsellor as having skills that are applied to a (passive) person who needs those skills. Becoming a counsellor in the narrative context implies a different approach to the counselling process, and reflects an approach that includes having the ability to conduct a narrative counselling conversation. It is this ability that we attempted to develop during this module.

Personal and Professional Development of Counsellors

The changing role of the psychological service providers in the South African context contains certain implications for the training of these service providers. It also creates and develops awareness in training institutions of certain qualities in counsellors that would be more appropriate for this particular sociocultural context. These qualities have been commented on by various authors and include an ability to self-reflect, being self-aware, being able to read process, being flexible, not taking an authoritarian position in therapy as well as being aware of the effects of discourses on how clients' interpret their world (Donald. 1991; Kriegler, 1993; Parham, 1996; Smith, 1993; Van Schalkwyk et al., 2002; Weingarten, 1993). In the wider international therapeutic community in the past ten years, the personal and professional development of counsellors has also become a popular topic for discussion in the academic literature – not only with regard to what the definition of the terms would be, or whether they are one concept or two separate concepts, but also what the implications of the increasing awareness of the overall development of the counsellor would be for training practices.

In terms of a possible difference between professional and personal development, there are perspectives on the development of counsellors that do not draw a clear distinction between personal and professional development. Frankland (1995) states that professional and personal development are almost interchangeable in the context of counselling as the professional work of counsellors always involves the use of the self at all times. Wilkins (1997) also states that professional

development is not only about formal training and study, but also about the ability to self-reflect and to discover, and that the whole process of training can become a journey of discovery rather than one of being taught. Reflective thinking can be defined as the active and ongoing exploration of the counsellor's attitudes and beliefs that contribute to his or her understanding of the client (Griffith & Frieden, 2000). These authors also state that the development of counsellors' reflective abilities should be an important goal in counsellor training as it is closely related to counsellor competence.

Irving and Williams (1999) add that much counsellor training appears to be concerned with facilitating and sometimes "forcing" students to become a certain sort of a person – as if there are set criteria for personal development. Johns (1996) also states that counselling training has increasingly placed a strong emphasis on the personal aspects of growth and development in addition to professional development. Importantly, Irving and Williams (1999) recognise that the appropriateness of particular personal development will depend on the ethos of the module and that different ways of working within counselling will have their own and unique developmental agendas. This is supported by Wattis and Gilmore (1998) who state that personal development must necessarily be congruent with the core theoretical model.

Perspectives that do distinguish between professional and personal development have their origins in modern thought, where knowledge is something that is conceptualised as being separate from the user or "knower". From a postmodern perspective, however, knowledge is seen as a product that is created between people and people and their world. For this reason, the distinction between the professional and the personal, and between knowledge and an attitude towards knowledge, cannot be incorporated in a postmodern view of the training of counsellors. In this study, I conceptualise the personal and professional development of counsellors as the integrated process of becoming a counsellor – the process of co-constructing an identity as a counsellor. If we consider that personal development means attending to the person of the counsellor in such a way that it increases his or her ability to be present and effective in counselling (Wilkins, 1997), and that the professional work of counsellors always involve the use of the self at all times, it

makes sense to think of students developing on a personal as well as professional level during their training process.

As seen in the discussion on the academic literature, there are various models available on the development of counsellors. Development is understood as something that progresses through various stages, with different themes that characterise the different phases. Broadly speaking, it is often assumed in these models that students progress from feeling incompetent to feeling competent, and that they move from a more dependent position to a more independent position in their relationship with the trainer or supervisor (Hogan, 1964; Loganbill et al., 1982; Stoltenberg, 1981).

Mahoney (1986), Nelson and Neufeldt (1998), and Winslade et al. (1997) have all commented on the fact that an integration of intra- and interpersonal awareness in training programmes is essential to develop relationship qualities and competencies in counsellors. Corey (1996) states that

> the training of a multi-cultural counsellor does not rest on gaining knowledge and skills with regards to different theories, …but also on producing counsellors who have self-awareness… It is essential that counsellor education programs focus on the counsellor as a person and not stop with teaching students an array of intervention strategies. Counsellors must first know themselves before they can employ any counselling technique successfully (p.109).

To enable us therefore to conceive of the training of counsellors as a context that has the ability to develop counsellors both on a personal and professional level, and to construct training programmes that are aligned in terms of pedagogy, the counselling skills model and personal development, it is necessary to define the training process (for the purpose of this conversation), on two levels. It is a process of being in counselling as well as a process of becoming a counsellor. The central themes that emerged from the participants' journals were: (1) self-reflection: development through reflecting on the content of the training material, which relates more to the area of developing the person of the counsellor as conceptualised in the literature and (2) developing as a narrative counsellor, which includes the acquisition of counselling skills through role plays.

In the following section, I present the process of counsellor development as it emerged in the participants' stories in journal format, using the dates and themes for class discussions as headings. I will also include my own reflections on the process of counsellor development as a developmental process that is situated in a context that allows for both the process of being in counselling as well as the process of becoming a counsellor.

Role plays were not included from the start, as time was spent introducing the students to postmodernism and social constructionism. As the module progressed, this changed and more time was allocated for role plays and skills training. The students' entries in their journals became less frequent and less content-focused as the months went by. As I did not supervise their journal writing during the year, and no reward or evaluation was given for their journals, I used only the stories that were given to me.

15 February: First class/Starting the Conversation

Students' Reflections

At the start of the module, some students felt excited at the prospect of learning how to do counselling. They commented on the fact that it was as if the word "counselling" was a magic word surrounded by secrecy and that it was something that only special people can do. The first journal entries were written after the first training session, and students expressed excitement about this new and different perspective in counselling. They found the class discussion very informative but also realised that it would take time to digest postmodernism and social constructionism because they were so different and challenged their value and belief systems. However, they felt that this approach was within their capabilities – as one student put it "not like a psychoanalytic mountain". In contrast with this, there were students who wrote about feeling vulnerable and exposed in the first class because it made them view themselves in a different light and questioned everything that they have been taught so far.

During the class discussion students started to apply the theory to their own lives. They commented on the fact that they became aware of the power they had to construct their own realities, and it was liberating for them to realise that multiple possibilities exist apart from the dominant stories in their lives. One student

summarised this as follows: "A whole world opened up when I started to question my own assumptions, but to really apply this would take a lot of self-reflection and would not be without experiencing discomfort". This process led them to the realisation that this was not only a theoretical class, but that it would teach them something about life.

Some of the students commented on the process of training and could see that narrative principles were used in the trainer-student relationship. They could also reflect on the journal writing and said that writing a journal felt like the beginning of their own narrative for structured counselling. They felt that the journal was where they would start to link certain events together in a particular sequence, creating stories about their lives and about the lives of those around them.

Trainer/Researcher's Reflections

In both Stoltenberg and Delworth's (1987) integrated developmental model and Hogan's (in Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992) model, the authors describe four levels in the development of counsellors. Level one includes the mastering of new skills and putting these skills to practice, although students are often overcritical towards the self instead of developing an insightful self-understanding. In this research, the students felt excited at the prospect of mastering counselling skills, although the process of training sometimes made them feel vulnerable. In contrast with the overcritical stance and a lack of insight that are suggested by Stoltenberg and Delworth (1987), the students generally felt that the narrative counselling model was within their capabilities and that they would not only learn about abstract theoretical concepts, but also something about life itself. They were empowered by the fact that through the repositioning of the trainer and students, they could become aware of their power to construct their own reality. Boud (1993) comments on this by saying that classes today should encourage students to apply their knowledge in ways that acknowledge the emotional richness of the contexts in which we work. South Africa is indeed an emotionally rich context (Els & Schoeman, 2000).

22 February: Deconstructing the I

During this class the students participated in a two-part exercise where they had to complete the sentence "I am….." Then, in a conversation with another student, they had to answer questions aimed at deconstructing this statement. In the second

part of the exercise, the students had to complete the sentence "When I am not…..
(the answer to question 1), I am….." and again answer the deconstructing questions in
a conversation with a fellow student.

Students' Reflections

Most of the students experienced the atmosphere in the class as more relaxed.
There were increased opportunities for contact with the trainer which encouraged
more students to participate in class conversations.

The exercise in class evoked different reactions from different students. These
reactions ranged from experiencing it as a difficult task to really enjoying it and
appreciating the increased self-knowledge that participation facilitated. The students
who found the "I am" exercise difficult said that they found it hard to self-reflect and
that they felt very vulnerable to participate in a process of self-reflection in a
conversation with another student. In spite of this, the exercise provided clarity and
answers to issues that they had never before thought about. For other students the
exercise was a positive growth experience as it started the process of writing their
own story. They compared this experience to a good counselling session as they were
surprised that they became aware of aspects of themselves that were previously
unknown.

Students did not only become aware of previously unknown parts of
themselves, however, but also became aware of the possibility of alternative stories.
As one student said, he perceived himself "quite differently" after the class than
before. This was supported by students' stories that spoke about learning about the
un-storied events in their lives. One student storied this process as follows:

> To know what story dominates my life helped me to discover the events I
> relate as important as well as the events I leave out. This helped me gain a
> clearer perspective on my perceptions and I realised today that I don't want to
> be living a story of survival, as it is limiting my life. I don't want to be just
> alive – I want to be living!

Developing as a Narrative Counsellor

The students thought that the trainers would give a demonstration of a counselling session and were very anxious because they were expected to conduct counselling conversations. They struggled to adapt to the languaging practices of narrative counselling and related stories of confusion, and a realisation that knowledge about theory and method is not enough when you do role plays.

Trainer/Researcher's Reflections

 The exercise that students did on "Deconstructing the I" opened up spaces for self-reflection, increased self-knowledge as well as a better understanding of the theory as they could become aware of the possibility of alternative stories in their own lives, which again meant that they started to write a story of self-understanding early on in the module.

However, they struggled to relate the realisation of having constructional abilities in their own lives to a confidence in the counselling situation, as they struggled with narrative language practices in counselling conversations. Developing new ways of being a counsellor was not easy for the students as they struggled to loosen the grip of thin descriptions of counsellors such as being the expert and having confidence. Hogan (in Skovholt & Ronnestad, 1992) also mentions that students are often insecure and dependent in the beginning stages of becoming a counsellor. What might have exacerbated this experience for the students in this study is that the expert definition of being a counsellor was also being taken away.

<p style="text-align:center">*1 March: Thick and Thin Descriptions*</p>

Students' Reflections

Most of the students felt that today's lecture on thin and thick descriptions made a great impact on their way of thinking. One student called it a "light-bulb moment". They realised that if you can just find the one time when things are better for your client, help them remember it and colour it richly, the problem is going to lose its grip.

They related the lecture not only to their clients' lives, but also to their own, and realised that they create their own life narrative by selecting events from their experiences. This process often leads to thin conclusions about themselves. They could write about their own suffering because of these thin conclusions which others have come to about them. They could realise that they are not happy with many of the labels that are given to them and that these labels are stories that have repeated so many times that they have become dominant stories in their lives. However, they now had hope that this would be able to change.

The students' stories reflect an appreciation of the fact that the theory is integrated into practice and felt that the module is a challenging and exciting experience. One student said that she realised that her story is busy changing and that she now knows how it feels to be at the receiving end of narrative counselling.

Developing as a Narrative Counsellor

After the third training session, the students felt that they were learning more about narrative counselling, and that the more they learnt, the more the ideas grew in them. It was difficult at first for the students to participate in role plays. Most of them were happy to disappear in the masses and it was a relief for them to discover that almost all the students were battling with role playing the counsellor.

They did not want to role play the counsellor as they doubted their own skills, struggled to use "narrative language", kept on looking for core problems and did not want to be exposed in front of their fellow students. This held true, however, not only for the counsellors' position but also for role-playing the client. When they were the client, they often felt that they were sitting in front of the whole class with their souls exposed.

In practising the counselling process during role plays, the students felt the absence of structure the most keenly. They usually thought of the role of the counsellor as an expert who sits there with textbook knowledge and looks for pathology. They realised that narrative counselling adopts a fundamentally different viewpoint. To be a good counsellor you have only yourself, and you cannot rely on a battery of psychometric tests as your defence. For some students, this lack of structure was somewhat comforting as they realised that they did not have to steer the process,

but that if they listened carefully and asked the right questions, it would be steered naturally by the client. As one student put it:

> I realised that I can never really know how it is to be someone else, and only by asking certain questions, is it possible to get to know someone. I always thought that I had to give answers, and am relieved to learn that this is not the case in narrative counselling.

Trainer/Researcher's Reflections

The discussion in class on thin and thick descriptions was also reflected in the students' attempts to define the positions and tasks of counsellors and clients. Students wrote about the fact that they were experiencing difficulties in the counselling conversations, from both the counsellor's as well as the clients' positions. As counsellors they struggled to let go of their "expertise" in terms of theories and psychometric tests. They felt as if they had to give up control as the client would now be providing the stories and that they as counsellors had the task of asking questions to facilitate and elicit the awareness of alternative stories.

As clients they felt vulnerable and exposed. Wilkins (1997) writes that there is a valuable learning experience in playing the client as it helps students to remember and understand some of the thoughts, feelings and fears that clients might have. Through using the words *vulnerable* and *exposed* in describing the clients' experience, they also designate a passive role to clients. Anderson and Goolishian (1992) say that dominant narratives in people's lives also provide the vocabulary that they use to describe their realities. At first the students' stories were limited by their dominant stories of counsellors being the experts and clients the passive recipients of knowledge.

In the students' journeys, they could, in time, develop a richer description on the role of the counsellor and the client. They could see that narrative counsellors were not responsible for the client's growth, but could only journey with the client and seek out stories that would assist clients to break from the influence of the problem on their life. In this description lies the realisation that counselling is a relational process, and that the positioning of counsellors enables or limits clients' abilities to position themselves. Of importance here is that students could experience these stories of difference in the relationship between trainer and student. In narrative

counselling, the intention is not only to facilitate stories that represent experiences, but to co-construct stories through which people can live in their preferred ways (White, 1991). For this reason, it is very important that the narrative counselling process and the training process are isomorphic.

In contrast with a more relational view of the counselling process that narrative counselling training encourages, themes in the second level in Stoltenberg and Delworth's (1987) developmental model include a shift away from a self-preoccupation to a focus on the client. Focusing on the client also leads to the development of empathy, resulting in the danger of becoming enmeshed with the clients' feelings. However, it is clear that if we use the narrative counselling context for training, it is less vulnerable to practices of enmeshment as students are encouraged to take responsibility for their contribution in conversations.

8 March: Externalising the Problem and Tracing the History

Students' Reflections

In this class they learnt how to externalise the problem and explore the history of a problem. For most of them this was of immense value as it helped them to honour to the humanness and the integrity of the client and prevented them from labelling their clients. They also felt that for the first time the counselling process was going somewhere. This applied not only in their development as counsellors but also to the work on their own life stories. Some of them found externalisation and tracing the history to be both exciting and anxiety provoking. Things were starting to make sense now, and so their involvement in the whole process of counselling made them increasingly nervous as they could see the effect of the counselling process on their own lives.

They could also see, however, that externalising the problem and tracing the history invited hope and showed change where this was previously thought to be impossible. It dawned on them that everyone, no matter how terrible their life, has an alternative story or a preferred way of being and that it is the counsellor's role to help the person discover this through asking specific questions.

Developing as a Narrative Counsellor

Most students felt that so far the classes were extremely valuable and enjoyable as they provided a new perspective on how a client experiences the counselling process. However, they were aware that it was a very new approach for all of them and that it would take time to integrate narrative counselling as part of their way of thinking.

Many students still wrote about their resistance to participating in the role plays. They felt incompetent as counsellors, exposed as clients and generally struggled to use the narrative language. They reported that their biggest problem as counsellors was to listen to the client and not to sit and think about what question to ask next. Some students were more positive about role playing the counsellor as they received positive feedback from the trainers, which in turn contributed to their positive self-concept and helped them to trust their own skills.

As clients they found it strange to speak to a classmate about personal matters and then after class just pretend that they did not know about each others' issues. One student said that she experienced this switching from intense concern for the client (fellow student) to a stance of total disregard as cruel, blatantly insincere and therefore totally unacceptable.

Others were surprised at how well they experienced the counselling to work when they played the client, and found that they learnt a great deal about themselves in sessions where they were the client. They noticed that narrative counselling goes deep really quickly and challenges one to face one's own self-manipulation, to stop pretending and do something about it.

15 March: Exploring the Effects of the Problem

Students' Reflections

The students still felt that the principles of narrative counselling had an impact on their lives and led to moments of self-revelation. They experienced every week's lecture as a piece of a puzzle that was now starting to resemble a picture. During this time in the training process, some of the students could also critically look at the fact that they had made narrative counselling their new truth and that they had developed a

superior attitude towards other theories. This made them realise that this was also just one of many approaches through which they could see the world.

They also related this work to their own lives, and could see that when they externalised and explored the effects of the problems in their lives it influenced the way they view themselves. One student said: "If I manage to distance myself from chronic tiredness, I can see that I listen to its voice too often. There are a lot of things that I do manage despite its presence in my life. I think to encourage clients to do the same is a big challenge". Another student said that she found the classes valuable as she could start seeing the dominant stories and the effect that they had on her in her own life. For her, sometimes narrative counselling becomes the problem that needs to be externalised and explored because she sometimes feel stuck and does not know which questions to ask. Some students also felt that their own process of deconstructing assumptions and ideas led to them experiencing some confusion in terms of their own identity.

Developing as a Narrative Counsellor

During this training session, some of the students started to develop confidence in their counselling skills. One student described this experience as follows: "Every positive realisation that the client made, made me feel like I had reached the summit of Mount Everest. I have fallen in love with narrative therapy". As counsellors, students started to feel that they could be more relaxed and spontaneous in their languaging in the role plays and that this made it easier to have counselling conversations.

Other students felt more hesitant in the counselling process and still struggled to talk in front of other students. They experienced the role plays as anxiety provoking and avoided playing the therapist, even though they liked the approach. This hesitancy and tension were described by one student through the image of learning to dance – sometimes it felt to her as if she would be able to learn the first step of this tango and sometimes it felt to her that even though she learnt more every time about this amazing dance and found it incredibly attractive, she was not progressing well. She really wanted to dance this dance and could see that maybe she was missing the small growth processes, because at times she felt like a good counsellor.

12 April: Tracing the History and Exploring the Effects of the Problem (Again)

This was the first class after the holiday break and the students requested a role play only day. We decided to repeat the theme of the last training session before the holiday, as a way of "getting back" into narrative counselling.

Developing as a Narrative Counsellor

The students experienced an increased sense of confidence as counsellors before the holiday break, but now some of the students struggled during the counselling conversations. They felt that they were not able to plan in counselling conversations and this made them feel "out of control", as if they had walked into a wall. Most of the students seemed confused by the fact that the client provides both dominant as well as alternative stories, and that they were tasked with asking questions to facilitate and elicit awareness of alternative stories. Despite this frustration, the students could allow themselves to make more mistakes more often as they felt that this was the only way that they could learn. They sometimes wanted to replace the "counselling conversation" with a "normal conversation" as they were tired of figuring out how to use narrative language. They experienced some sort of relief when they did exactly this and found out that it worked. In this way, they could become less judgemental towards themselves.

 Other students said that at last they realised what being a narrative counsellor really meant – that they could not be responsible for the client's growth, nor could they help the client out of their circumstances. They could see that a counsellor can only journey with the client and seek out stories that will assist clients to break from the influence of the problem on their life.

19 April: Deconstructing Discourses

During this class, the students had to create new cover pages for women's magazines that would attempt to deconstruct the main discourses on women in society. They divided into groups and then had to present their constructed magazine cover to the rest of the class.

Students' Reflections

The students felt that the exercise on deconstruction made them see that every individual counsellor's stories are situated in a context of other stories, stories that are planted and cared for in and by a cultural context. It also opened their eyes to their own assumptions; and they noticed how many of the things they believe in are discourses that they unquestioningly accepted from their social and family context. They also learnt that deconstruction does not necessarily mean to change but rather to understand, as they experienced how difficult it is to deconstruct something that has become part of your life. Through this exercise they realised that they co-maintain some of their problem stories in society. For example, some of them remarked that anorexia and bulimia could only exist in a culture that values thinness.

The students also reported that the exercise in deconstruction helped them to understand and become more comfortable with the process of narrative counselling. They understood that narrative counselling is an abstract concept that can only be understood when one experiences it. They also felt that it was almost something that could not be taught only verbally, and that it also only makes sense over time.

19 July: Taking Responsibility

During this class, the students marked their own term papers. This was part of the "acts of resistance" against the hierarchical relationship between trainers and students.

Students' Reflections

The students felt uncomfortable in marking their own work. They wondered about the process of evaluating something that they had done, and themes of objectivity and subjectivity surfaced in their stories. Others realised that the mark they gave themselves had to do with their unique experience in the module, and only they could evaluate this. One student wrote that marking their own tests was quite an experience, as it has never happened before. She found it to be an enriching and empowering experience that was simultaneously nerve-wracking, as they had to take the responsibility of marking correctly. For her, the exercise fitted perfectly with narrative counselling in that it brought about change by placing everyone just outside

their comfort zone and then empowering them by giving them the decision on what mark to give themselves.

26 July: Alternative Stories and Unique Outcomes

Developing as a Narrative Counsellor

As they learnt how to listen for unique outcomes, students expressed the realisation that the "basic counselling skills" such as warmth, empathy and good listening skills were essential in all counselling relationships. When they tried too hard to ask the "right" questions, they seemed to lose their basic counselling skills and the conversation tended to imitate an interview consisting of questions and answers. The students then felt frustrated as they struggled to listen and could not hear the unique outcomes and alternative stories. They knew that unique outcomes are the doorways to alternative stories, but they struggled to stay with the clients' story and kept on thinking of solutions to give to their clients.

2 August: The Thickening of Alternative Stories

Again, the class only consisted of role play exercises. The theory of the narrative counselling process had by now been entirely given over to the students, and they wanted as much practical experience as possible.

Developing as a Narrative Counsellor

In the thickening of alternative stories, students expressed their surprise at the possibility of including documentation such as letters as well as other people in the client's life in the counselling process. They said it all made sense when explained to them, but that they still struggled to apply this in the practical situation of counselling conversations. Many of the students could write about their increased confidence in the counselling situation, although the role play context still contributed to their own anxiety. However, once they became involved in the counselling conversation, their anxiety soon dissipated.

Trainer/Researcher's Reflections

From the students' point of view, the problem story that they needed to deconstruct was their inability to let go of expert knowledge and allow the client to become a co-author in the counselling process. They therefore not only learnt how to initiate counselling conversations that could facilitate a process of deconstructing grand narratives and discourses in clients' lives, but also experienced a process of deconstructing some of their own assumptions and discourses about psychology and counselling. At the start of this process, most of the students were still reluctant to participate in role plays and found it difficult to let go of knowledge and just listen.

As the process of deconstruction developed during the course, the students realised that deconstruction opened up the possibility for alternative stories. With this realisation, they allowed themselves to participate more freely in role plays. They did not necessarily have more confidence as counsellors, but were more relaxed and spontaneous in the role plays, and where better able to accept criticism without feeling dejected. Being a counsellor did no longer mean being perfect. In the narrative counselling process, this parallels conversations where spaces are opened for new possibilities through deconstructive listening practices (Freedman & Combs, 1996). From a developmental perspective, the fluctuation between having confidence and not wanting to participate is a theme that is reflected in the developmental models of both Hogan (in Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992) and Stoltenberg and Delworth (1987).

The process of deconstruction permitted the students to see that it enabled them to honour the humanness and integrity of their clients, which limited invitations to label their clients. Their lack of confidence in their own counselling skills fits with the principle in narrative counselling of the not-knowing position of the counsellor, and adopting this stance limited the possibilities for them to see themselves as the expert (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992).

At the end of the training sessions on deconstructing the problem story, the students' perception of their competence was situated more in their ability to reposition themselves than in having specific counselling skills. Els and Schoeman (2000) reflect on this in saying that it is important not to train the beginner counsellor to become a specific type of counsellor, but to rather facilitate a training process where they can decide how they would like to practise. The students could see that

deconstruction does not necessarily mean to change, but to understand, as they experienced that it is difficult to deconstruct something that has become part of your life. The students' process also mirrors a process of development, starting from a position that limits movement, to a position that allows flexibility in the counselling context. This specific process of development is congruent with a postmodern and social constructionist view of the self as being continually constructed in relational contexts (Burr, 1995; Gergen 1991, 1994).

The process of the students in this study also reflects elements of development as reflected in Stoltenberg and Delworth's model (1987). However, it differs in the following respect. These authors propose that during level three, a more stable, autonomous and reflective counsellor develops, with a personalised approach to practice and a greater use and understanding of the self. The difference between the processes that crystallised in this study and the process described in Stoltenberg and Delworth's model (1987) lies in the direction of movement – the students in this study moved away from a position of stability and certainty towards flexibility and fluidity in relationships. This contrasts with Stoltenberg and Delworth's model that proposes the possibility of developing a position of certainty in practice.

16 August: Final Session

Reflections on Developing as a Narrative Counsellor

During this class, the students who wanted to participate could story their journey in this module. It was quite clear that the students had experienced uncertainty and some degree of fear in the module. As the end of the module approached, they were worried as they felt that they should all by now be competent, confident and able to make use of this counselling training when they left the university. Some did not feel at all ready to apply this theory in practice. Other students were sad that the module was over because of the effect it had had on their lives; they felt that the ending of the module was like saying goodbye to a good friend.

Students commented on the fact that the opportunity to reflect on the module during the last class meant a lot to them as they could reflect on the year as a whole. Most of them experienced this as a unique module, with one student writing: "In my

five years of studying, this was the one and only time that I actually saw the trainers living what they were teaching. They didn't see themselves as the experts, but rather treated the students as the experts".

The stories that the students told were mostly stories that intertwined their personal and professional development during the module. Some students commented on these aspects separately and others reported that this module was meaningful on a professional as well as on a personal level. They were surprised at how much they had grown and were convinced that the module had contributed to their growth as counsellors. They could see that they had not only gained theoretical knowledge, but also started growing in another direction, from the inside out. Narrative counselling helped them to look at the story behind their stories and played a significant role in the search for who they are. Another student wrote:

> the course had and is still having many implications on my life as an individual. There was however one implication that stood out above the rest and which was part of every class in structured counselling. Structured counselling first gave me a slap in the face by waking me up to the reality that everyone has some social constructs. After this "ego bubble burst" structured counselling held me tight and climbed into my heart because no one is perfect but as long as they try, half the battle is won.

The students were also surprised that the module could mean different things to every student, just as things have different meanings in each person's life. However, they felt that it was good to hear other people's experiences of narrative counselling as there were also many shared experiences, such as the anxiety they felt when doing counselling. They could express the generally shared feeling that they understood narrative counselling on a theoretical level, but that it was difficult to apply it in practice.

Their stories narrated their development as counsellors as a process, with the module representing just the beginning phase. When they thought back over the year, they realised how well the approach works for self-reflection and realised that no counsellor in this approach would ever think that they have arrived. They thought that narrative counselling made them think about their life, how it started, who contributed

and how they could re-author their own stories. They knew that the foundation was laid in this module, and that it was their responsibility to take it further.

Trainer/Researcher's Reflections

Towards the end of the module, students had to take more and more responsibility for their own learning experiences, within the repositioning context of training. At first they were apprehensive, but could also see that it was an enriching and empowering experience and so they were ready for the final dance in narrative counselling: finding unique outcomes and co-authoring alternative stories. Polkinghorne (1988) states:

> The narrative therapist helps clients articulate and brings to language and awareness the narratives they have developed that give meaning to their lives. The clients are then able to examine and reflect on the themes they are using to organise their lives and to interpret their own actions and the actions of others. The reflective awareness on one's personal narrative provides the realisation that past events are not meaningful in themselves, but are given significance by the configuration of one's own narrative. This realisation can release people from the control of the past interpretations they have attached to events and open up the possibilities of renewal and freedom for change (p.183).

During the final training session students were asked to tell their stories of their process of becoming a counsellor as a way of linking their alternative stories across time. Bruner (1986) states that if we perform an expression, it is constitutive of meaning and experience and also relates to developing a "history of the present" (Freedman & Combs, 1996). This means linking preferred events across time in order to facilitate the survival of their meaning. The students spoke about their personal and professional development during the module, and expressed an appreciation that development meant different things for different students.

In their stories of developing as narrative counsellors, they felt that their conversational abilities had already made an impact on their practical work. They also knew that this was just the beginning of their journey as narrative counsellors and that they were still in the process of becoming counsellors. In their journey they could find comfort in the shared uncertainty among fellow students about doing counselling.

Lurhman (1998) states that "uncertain professionals are interpreters, highly conscious of their limitations, highly conscious of their capacity to distort, humble in the face of their ignorance and hesitant to assert their knowledge of someone else's life" (p.467).

The Writing Story of Chapter 3

Building Puzzles That Make Sense

My father was an engineer who placed a high value on the language of mathematics and logic. As a child, I learnt that my ability to think in a logical manner and to express myself in ways that were systematic and sensible (sense-ible), earned me time in his company. This ability to search for the logic in things and make sense of processes are important parts of my identity, but as with all constructs, this allows certain experiences to be storied with greater ease than others.

Reflecting back on writing the literature story, and on what I decided to include and what to leave out, I remember my frustration and resentment at the fragmented stories that were available. I know that the resentment and the frustration will reach the reader as well, because I could not manage to smooth the jagged edges of the story on the literature. The structure that I used to write this story, beginning with the orientations towards training, moving on to the professional and personal development of counsellors and ending with skills acquisition and developmental experiences of counsellors, allowed me to search for the possibilities of integrating these aspects.

The literature I consulted for this chapter, my own journal that I kept during the training process as well as the students' journals led to a process of reflection on my own development as a therapist and as a trainer. In the fragmented available literature, I could remember something of my own confusion when I was training as a therapist, often not knowing what to do in the therapeutic process because of the sometimes conflicting information we received from various models of therapy and psychopathology. My own life philosophy, which contains strong themes of social constructionism, has at times also made it difficult for me the train within a higher education setting where the context offers various measures of resistance against postmodern educational practices.

In training the students and in writing this chapter therefore, I focused on creating an aligned training experience, one that would be congruent in both process and content, as a resistance against my own experience that was fragmented and sometimes felt like a poorly built puzzle. However, in my attempt to make sure that the learning experiences and theories fitted well together, I started to reflect on how this impacted on my ability to allow for learning experiences that did not seem to fit well with this puzzle. One of these learning experiences was that most of the students felt incompetent as narrative counsellors at the end of the module, even though they had expressed valuable personal growth experiences.

In my initial writing attempts it was therefore difficult for me to include the stories of students that felt incompetent as counsellors after completion of the module, because this challenged ideas of myself as a "competent" trainer, and made me wonder about the effectiveness of the module. In conversations with my peers (therapists and lecturers), I could start seeing that these were part of my modernist training goals – creating successful counsellors by helping them to acquire a certain body of knowledge and a certain set of skills. This chapter therefore also reflects my journal of development as a trainer, moving from the position of knowing about counsellor development, to a position where I could see that I had to give up my knowledge in order for counsellors to develop.

A Student's Reflections on Chapter 3

First Part: Relevance for me: The first part of the chapter made me think a lot about the South African context that we as people in the mental health profession need to consider. I remember in my Master's first year a lecturer telling us that most of the people who need psychological help are those that do not have medical aids or cannot afford the rates that psychologists ask. As there are many lay counsellors that work with out the necessary education what better way to help the people who cannot afford psychologists then a group of trained individuals who have been trained efficiently but have not obtained their Master's degrees. This will then also help those individuals who wanted to work in the mental health profession but are unlucky in getting in to study their Master's degree.

Second Part: Revisiting Snooky: During the process of reading through the rest of the chapter I found myself back in BPsych. I had many mixed emotions both

pleasant and unpleasant. In between these mixed emotions, one aspect stood out for me. This aspect concerned the past, present and the time that went between my BPsych year and where I find myself today (2004).

While reading I realised that my experience of Snooky was in 2001 and 2002. Many memories came back to me and I missed some of them and some I would not like to experience again easily. Whether they were bad or good those two years were full of learning, growth, experiences, pleasures and pain. In other words, they were rich and full years and if I had the choice of knowing what I would have had to go through I would definitely do them again. I thus began to question, that if they were in my past, do they feature in my life today.

In my internship I have come to realise that Snooky (narrative paradigm) is not the perfect fit for me when working therapeutically and that there are other paradigms that perhaps fit my personality and way of working better. This made me sad as Snooky and I had walked such a close and narrow path in the past.

In my further readings, I thought a lot about Snooky and who she was, what defined her, why she came into my life, etc. As I began to ask myself all these questions I started to realise that many of the answers to these questions were still in my life today both in my working life and my personal life which then affected the psychological me, physical me, social me and emotional me. As these realisations became stronger and stronger I could feel Snooky coming closer and closer to me and even felt her inside of me. A type of peace started settling on me as if the past was beginning to become the future and the gap between the past and the present had disappeared.

I believe that we are everything our past has made us to be in other words we are the stories that we have experienced as well as the genetics that form us. The problem however is that we forget to often the parts of our stories that could make the most difference in our lives today, just as I had forgotten that once you meet someone they will always be a part of your story just as Snooky will always be a part of my story.

Last Part: True to the end: Reading the end of the chapter was like a "wow" moment for me. During the course in 2001 and 2002 one aspect that stood out for me can easily be explained with the use of the saying "practise what you preach". It was

amazing to experience what was being taught to us practically by means of the lecturer actually living in and out of class the principles of what she was teaching us. Every aspects of our course was Snooky there was never a Snooyk or a Sooky or even a Nooky.

At the end of the chapter the lecturer brought her own experiences into the chapter and explained what was difficult for her during the course once again bringing in the principles of what was taught to us. What a validation of truth and realness. For me the last part of the chapter was the lecturer saying "my story is one of lecturing, researching and being human and therefore I am an expert in my experience" just as all of us are experts in our own experience.

CHAPTER 4

THE CONSTRUCTION OF COUNSELLOR IDENTITY

Stories in the Literature

Introduction

Most psychologists agree that, from a modernist viewpoint, the object of psychological enquiry is the individual person and the laws within which that person functions (Sampson, 1989). This longstanding tradition of inquiry into the nature of the self as well as a Western commitment to the self as an independent unit has accumulated more than two thousand years of discourse on the self, which includes the work of Plato, Aristotle, Machiavelli, Augustine, Pascal and Locke. This commitment to the individual psyche has continued in spite of the fact, highlighted by Geertz (1979), that the Western conception of the person as a bounded whole contrasted against a social background is a rather peculiar one when compared to conceptualisations within other cultures. The theories of the self that have developed through this Westernised conceptualisation now act as definitions of the self, in other words as a discourse about selfhood, and impact on a variety of processes on a social level, such as legislative decision making, assessment procedures, and justifying patterns in cultural life (Gergen, 1994). Kitzinger (1989) writes that identity in this regard "is what you can say you are according to what they say you can be" (p.82).

In my own reading of the literature on personality, self and identity, Shotter and Gergen's (1989) *Texts of Identity* provided a starting point for exploring postmodern conceptualisations of self and identity. Bamberg's work (2004) on stories, tellings and identities also interested me because of his enquiry into the "who am I" question that relates to positionings of identity. A postmodern approach poses certain challenges to the definition of the object of investigation in the field of psychology as the contained self or bounded whole (Sampson, 1989). The position of challenge that I concern myself with in this study is social constructionism, as this allows the inquiry into being human to move beyond the individual to acknowledge the contribution of relationships in the conceptualisation of the self. A social constructionist inquiry also

does not focus primarily on the accuracy of the identity account, but more on the function(s) that it serves in the relational world in which it operates.

In more recent and postmodern conceptualisations in psychological literature it has become somewhat commonplace to shed any Platonic ideas of essentialism in terms of identity and to adopt the view that self is the narrative that emerges from connecting discrete and disparate events in a coherent manner (Socor, 2000). I will therefore afford more writing space to elaborate on this understanding of identity compared to premodern and modern conceptualisations of the self. The literature story includes the public narratives on the sociological and historical development in the understanding of identity as well as the more relevant understanding of identity as existing in and as narrative. It also includes the private narratives of students on the construction of identity as counsellors.

Changing Identities: Moving From Premodern to Postmodern

Until the 18th century, there existed a general consensus on the nature of the self. Plato originated this view of self and it was refined by Descartes (Giles, 1986). According to this view, the self is regarded as an inner, nonmaterial entity which is permanently fixed in an unchanging and immortal substance – the soul. From a scientifically and empiricist viewpoint, Hume (1739-1740) challenged this view of the self in his *Treatise of Human Nature,* in which he states that a conscious reflection on the self reveals a series of fleeting mental perceptions instead of a permanent inner self. He also discarded the soul as fiction; and once this seat of a permanent self was questioned his work left us with the challenge of explaining how the self of today is the same self of yesterday or ten years ago. The next two hundred years saw numerous theories develop increasingly more sophisticated accounts of the self (Giles, 1986).

In traditional premodern societies identity theory proposed that identity was solid and stable and served as a function of predefined social roles and traditional systems. These systems provided boundaries and sanctions to one's place in the world, while at the same time pre-scribing by de-scribing patterns of thought and behaviour. In this context, identity was therefore largely unproblematic and did not warrant reflective discussion. Identity crises were unknown phenomena and the modification of identity an unnecessary activity (Kellner, 1992).

In modern societies, identity is conceptualised as either being a cognitive, psychic, neurological or biological entity (Capara & Van Heck, 1992). The dominant conception of the self is characterised as being a structure that is centralised and self-contained (Sampson, 1988). Kellner (1992) also states that the modern self is associated with fundamental and essentially unchanging properties, and this includes Descartes' 'cogito', Kant's and Husserl's transcendental ego, and the rational self in the age of Enlightenment. In addition to this emphasis on stability, the modern self has been described as an integrated and decontextualised entity separate from its social world (Cushman, 1990; Hoskins & Leseho, 1996.) Maddi (1996) also views the human personality as having consistent patterns of thoughts and feelings. Kvale (1992) supports this by saying that

> in modernity, the person is an object for a universal will, or for general laws of history and nature. Man has become the centre of the world … a self stretched out between what it is and what it ought to be (p.34).

During the course of modernity, the concept of identity slowly became subject to change. Movement, multiple selves and reflexiveness all became part of a modern identity. For a long time, however, in spite of these changes, modern forms of identity were still subject to a circumscribed set of roles and norms and according to common psychological wisdom, identity referred to the characteristics of the individual (Gover, 2003). The characteristics of modern identities therefore include stability, change and other-relatedness – the tension between constancy and movement. There was also a growing awareness of the fact that an individualistic and rationalistic view of the self reflected an ethnocentric and Western view of the self (Hermans, Kempen & Van Loon, 1992).

Postmodern Reflections on the Self

Introduction

Within a postmodern framework, the modern view of the self as a coherent and integrated unity is challenged by the view that the self is constructed in relationship through specific practices of languaging within certain contexts (Anderson, 1997; Anderson & Goolishian 1992; Bruffee, 1986; Gergen, 1991, 1994; Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988; Kvale, 1992; Shotter, 1992). Burr (1995) adds that

"there is no objective evidence that you can appeal to which would demonstrate the existence of your personality" (p.21). Social constructionists prefer to use the words *identity* or *self* as a vessel of something that is fluid, rather than the word *personality* that might indicate something that is stable and enduring (Raskin, 2002). In the writing of the text I have deliberately omitted the article "the" in front of self, in order to language the subject and not the object.

Gergen (1985, 1990, 1991) argues that from a social constructionist viewpoint, everyday concepts rely on constructions within various cultural discourses, and that this leaves open the question of the psychological conception of what it is to be a person. A social constructionist perspective underscores the idea of conceptual indeterminacy and impacts on views of personal identity in the form of a shift from central to decentralised selves (Socor, 2000). Different ways of thinking about identity from a social constructionist perspective include that identity is socially constructed, that is constituted through language, and is organised and maintained through narratives (Freedman & Combs, 1996).

From a postmodern perspective therefore, the focus is on the processes and contexts within which people live (Cox & Lyddon, 1997). The stable self as concept separate from its context is brought into question, with a different view of identity and self. In focusing on the fluid nature of identity, social constructionists reject the idea of an inherent human nature existing across persons (Raskin, 2002) and prefer to describe the postmodern self as having unstable, fluid, and multiple characteristics. Lyotard (1984) writes:

> … no self is an island; each exists in a fabric of relations that is now more complex and mobile than ever before. Young or old, man or woman, rich or poor, a person is always located at "nodal points" of specific communication circuits, however tiny these may be (p.15).

Identity is therefore, from a postmodern perspective, not conceived of as something stable or essential (Burr, 1995; Gergen 1991, 1994), but is envisaged in the same terms of knowledge – in other words, self and knowledge are seen as being continually constructed and reconstructed in relational contexts. Looking back at the idea that conceptualisations of constructions lie within cultural discourses, it is also clear that our conceptualisation of identity in a postmodern discourse will make use of

words as language devices that are available to us, such as fluid, changing and multiple.

From this perspective, dialogue through language then constructs knowledge as well as self – therefore the self is seen as a result of social interactions (Sampson, 1989) and identity is seen as possessing dialogical qualities (Josselson & Lieblich, 1995; Shotter, 1995). However, social contexts do not only impact on the individual construction in a one-way process, but self and the social context are in continuous interaction – and construction of both (self and context) takes place on a continuous basis (Els & Shoeman, 2000; Gover, 2003).

Bamberg (2004) further elaborates on the two-way nature of the process between the individual and the wider context when he refers to the concept of positioning within the wider postmodern discourse on self and identity. Harre and Langenhove (1999) state that dominant discourses provide the meaning and values within which people are positioned, but this viewpoint has a rather strong determining underpinning. Bamberg's (2004) work on stories, telling and identities challenges this determining nature when he states that "being positioned" and "positioning oneself" are two different metaphors that originate in different people-world relationships; the first one is a world-people direction of fit and the other is a people-world direction of fit. He concludes his argument by saying that if we overcome this rift by stating that positions in themselves are constructed in talk, it is important then to analyse the process of how such positions come into existence and how they assist in the construction of self and identities.

In a further commentary on the concept of positioning, Hermans et al. (1992) also conceptualise self as dialogical in terms of a "dynamic multiplicity of relatively autonomous I positions" (p.28). In this conceptualisation the "I" can move between different positions and can occupy these positions fully in order to allow dialogue to develop between them. This dialogical self is also conceived of as social in that the "other" occupies positions within this multivoiced self. This dialogical and positioned self can only be understood within a historical and cultural context, confirming Bruner's (1990) statement that selves are not isolated centres in people's heads, nor do they exist without roots in the present.

In the following section, I discuss the definitions of self as a multilevelled text and self as narration from a social constructionist perspective.

Self as a Multilevelled Text

Sampson (1989) indicates that social constructionists prefer to write and speak about multiple selves that are constituted within socially constructed contexts of culture through the use of language. In this construction, each of us is a community of selves where every self has its own story which is associated with a particular sense of self (Allen & Allen, 1995). Self can then be regarded as a multilevelled text, consisting of multiple stories.

Gergen (1991) conceptualises the movement from a one-dimensional text to a multilevelled text as a phased process, moving from an essentialist stance to the experience of various positions that are available to the self: "life becomes a candy store for one's developing appetites" (p.150.) At the end of this process it then becomes possible for people to give up the idea of private psychological property to facilitate the full incorporation and acknowledgement of others and the role they play in the constant and continuous construction of the self. Gergen (1991) also comments on this multidimensional textual nature in stating that because a person is likely to be identified, talked about and be in relationship to others in a variety of contexts, the person may actually come to live out different identities in each of those settings. Selfhood then becomes a matter of how people are languaged and language in social contexts and relationships (White, 1991). In a constantly moving social context this multilevelled self is able to actively shape its life as one makes and remakes identity as possibilities in context change and evolve.

The possibility of positionings also becomes available through practices of self-reflection (Kolb, 1986) as self is no longer a singular agent in a stable world but rather consists of a landscape of multiple provisional possibilities (Gergen, 1991). Hermans et al. (1992) also comment on this in their conception of self as a multiplicity of I-positions where it is important to fully acknowledge the cultural possibilities and constraints within which the positioning and dialogue take place.

Self as Narration

Of relevance to our discussion here is that the literature on the postmodern self also offers ***self as author*** as a prominent metaphor. In this metaphor lies the possibility of engaging in dialogue and telling stories which are fundamental to human existence. However, it is not only the content of stories that are exchanged in dialogue that is meaningful. Rather, stories become a vehicle through which people make sense and find coherence (Hoskins & Leseho, 1996; McAdams, 1993). Russel and Wandrei (1996) emphasise this by referring to narrative (story) as the primary means through which people connect past, present and future events. However, the purpose of finding and telling stories about ourselves is not only about meaning making and finding coherence, but also relates to the actual construction of personal and social identity (Murray, 2003). Freeman's (1985, p.45) question: "Why, at this particular juncture, is there so much interest in narrative?" might be answered in this metaphor of self as author. It seems possible that the construction of life narratives might fulfil the role of creating coherence in a life world where external structures no longer perform this function.

The history of narrative and the use of narrative as constructive device has, according to Giles (1986), some of its beginnings in the discipline of theology. Narrative theology developed from the recognition that religion depends on sacred books or oral traditions which contains stories, which are generalised into a characterisation of the human condition. Before locating a narrative approach in the discipline of psychology, I will describe the development of narrative in the twentieth century as set out by Smith, Harre and Van Langehove (1995).

Early Soviet literary theorists were interested in the abstract structure of narrative and how it functioned within stories. One of the most influential works in this era was Propp's *Morphology of the Folktale* (1968) in which he reduces fairy tales to their functions. The American literary school took this further, with Frye's *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957) regarded as a seminal work which provides a series of schemes for the analysis of Western literature. In Europe, the French structuralist school focused on the semiotic analysis of narrative.

As a development from the placement of narrative within an individual context, Chambers (1984) analyses texts as acts of seduction, which place narrative

more in the context of the social world. Within a postmodern and social constructionist view of the self, Kotre (1984) was one of the first authors to explore the link between a life and the story that is told about it. He speculated on the presence of archetypal stories which place individual stories in the context of collective meanings, focusing on the possible meaning-creating potential of stories. Potter, Stringer and Wetherell (1984) continued this exploration between psychology and literature, stating that the common ground between psychology and literature could be called codes of intelligibility. Where a personality theory as code of intelligibility defines personality as being static, it has clear implications for the capacity of the individual to effect change in his or her situation.

Sarbin (1986) was the first to write an essay explicitly devoted to narrative psychology. Here narrative psychology's project is identified as an exploration of the ways that individuals make sense of their world through stories. His work proposes that the metaphor of mechanism in psychology be replaced by the metaphor of narrative. The usefulness of using a narrative metaphor instead of a paradigmatic one can be found in Bruner's (1986) work where he argues that a paradigmatic metaphor is useful for abstracting from context and that the narrative metaphor carries the context in which the narrative makes sense. May (1991) also describes the process of creating a self through narrative as the creation of a personal myth that interacts in a reciprocal manner with larger cultural contexts and multiple stories in which the individual lives. Thus, in the postmodern worldview, the self is constructed by cultural stories as well as the personal stories of one's life (Howard, 1991, Murray, 2003). Miller, Mintz, Hoogstra, Fung, & Potts (1992) add that the affinity between narrative and self is of such a nature that narrative plays a privileged role in the construction process of the self.

As a reaction to a more individualist approach to narrative, Gover (2003) developed a sociocultural theory of narrative in which he makes explicit the natural connections between narrative and personal identity. His sociocultural theory views mental phenomena as constituted by cultural historical and social contexts and explores the ways in which narrative language practices constitute the ongoing construction of personal identities in their various contexts. This also links to Hermans et al.'s (1992) work on the dialogical nature of the self that transcends the cultural limits of rationalism and individualism.

In Gover's (2003) conception of narrative and identity, he identifies five dimensions from which narrative and identity both emerge. These dimensions are time; artefacts such as language, signs and symbols; affect; activity; and self-reflexiveness. The time dimension refers to the fact that narratives are always told in the present and that narratives only make sense when they are related to other narratives. Allen and Allen (1995) agree that narrative transforms time into human time and makes things understandable by placing them on a time continuum, which permits a sense of cause and effect. The artefact dimension implies that in constituting identity individuals take up certain aspects of their world (such as language, behaviour and gesture) which provide the material for construction of identity. In terms of the sociocultural theory, affect is viewed as being an open phenomenon, indicating that emotion is viewed as constituted through contexts, rather than as having one meaning and being reducible to its physiological components. Gover (2003) also uses the term *self* to refer to the ability of people to occupy the "I" position as a self-conscious centre. Lastly, the inclusion of activity as dimension refers to the inseparability of narratives from the system of social practices which constitutes them.

More recently, narrative psychology has been seen as compatible with the social constructionist framework, where self is investigated as the product of public discourse. In *Texts of Identity* (Shotter & Gergen, 1989), the authors attempt to deconstruct the dominant text(s) on personality and identity as the central and sovereign right and property of the individual. Gergen (1994) also states that conceptions about the self are not a function of an individual's personal and private cognitive structure but function as a discourse about self. He adds that to say that we use stories to make ourselves comprehensible does not go far enough, and that we often live our relational world in a narrative form – that "lives are narrative events" (p.186). He comes to the conclusion that we live by stories – both in the telling and the realisation of the self. In a more recent article on narrative and moral identity, Gergen (2001) argues for identity as byproduct of narrative as identity is achieved not only through the conceptual components of narratives, but narrative forms are in themselves ways of self-portraying.

In Sarbin's (1986) and Gergen and Gergen's (1988; 1991) work we are invited to view identity as a *narrative identity*. Widdershoven (1993) also understands

narrative identity as the wholeness of an individual's life as it is experienced and articulated in stories. These stories contain multiple variables within a specific sociocultural frame as each society has its own set of construction rules and stories which limit which stories are told as well as how they are told. Stories are only accepted if they adhere to these patterns and rules. For this reason, the relationship between society and individual will definitely impact on the way that identity is constructed and narrated.

Within this conceptualisation of identity as narrative, Gergen and Gergen (1997) identify three types of narrative designs that are forms of self-construction. These narratives are referred to as the "stability narrative", the "progressive narrative" and the "regressive narrative". Each narrative indicates a particular orientation in terms of time. A stability narrative links events, images and concepts together in such a way that the narrating self remains the self throughout the story. If the linking of events is evaluated in terms of an increase or a decrease, these authors speak of progressive and regressive narratives. In terms of self construction, these last two types of narrative are preferred forms of self construction as they facilitate the challenge of stable and perpetuating social systems that so easily inhibit or limit the forming of preferred self narratives (Socor, 2000).

Construction of Counsellor Identity

In the theoretical conceptualisation of professional identity, and specifically counsellor identity (in this study), there has also been a move from a modernist to a postmodernist position. However, there is far more literature available on modernist frameworks of the development of the professional self (Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992; Wilkins, 1997) than on a social constructionist conceptualisation of the construction of counsellor identity.

Existing models on the professional development of counsellors use the metaphor of development to illustrate the process that counsellors participate in, both in their training and their professional career. These models have been discussed in Chapter 3. The last stage of these models usually proposes certain qualities that should be acquired by the counsellor-in-training and these are seen as some sort of end point to the process of development. Skovholt and Rønnestad (1992) provide us with a useful summary on the most influential models of counsellor development. The

common theme running through these models is that student-counsellors attain a level of mastery at the exit point of their training programme. According to Hogan (1964), this discourse of mastery includes narratives on personal autonomy, personal security and a high level of insight. Hill, Charles and Read (in Skovholt & Rønnestad, 1992) formulate the last phase as one of integrated personal style where the combination of theory and technique leads to a more consistent personal style and feedback from the clients are thought of in a more objective manner. In Hogan's (1964) developmental model the last stage is named integration, and is characterised by counsellors' realistic assessment of the world through being more flexible as well as personal security that is grounded in the awareness of insecurity.

In Skovholt and Rønnestad's (1992) own model on counsellor development, they see the conditional autonomy stage as the time when students leave the training programme and enter a full-time internship. They describe the central task in this stage as being able to function on an "established, professional level" (p.42). They describe the predominant affect during this stage as one of variable confidence as well as a strong need for confirmation and affirmation.

As an alternative perspective on the development of counsellor identity, I include here a consideration of an interview with Winslade (2003) that was conducted on the storying of professional identity from a narrative counselling and social constructionist perspective. The interview is based on his own work on counselling training programmes at Waikato University in New Zealand.

Winslade (2003) states that historically there have been assumptions in the counselling world that counsellors are somehow better people who have their private lives under control. In their work on counsellor education in New Zealand, however, they thought it might be better to invite students into an identity that allows for the human side of being a counsellor. This more modest professional identity does not involve separating the professional from the personal experiences of life, and simultaneously deconstructs the modernist notion of the self for both counsellors and clients. This alternative sense of self might include the recognition that counsellors also struggle to find preferred ways of being within certain discourses and discursive contexts.
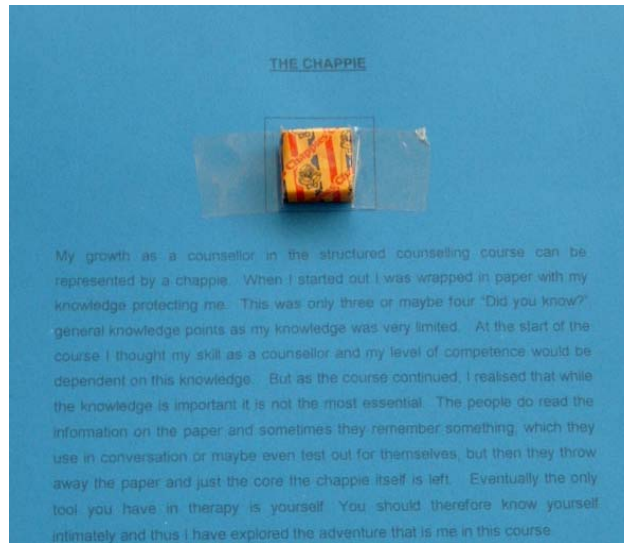
Winslade et al. (2000) propose a definition of professional identity as the development of a self-description that consists of values, attitudes, ideas, knowledge and skills that are consistent with the performance of the values and skills of counselling practice. Enabling students to put all these together and to make meaning of them through storylines makes it possible for them to articulate "*this is who I am as a counsellor and this is what I am trying to do in the world*" (p.3). In these authors' conceptualisation of constructing counsellor identity they encourage the storying of identities that are formed continuously in relationships within a specific training context.

In the next section, I look at the narratives that were available in the co-constructed training context of this study, and will consider how the students used these narratives to develop self-descriptions towards counsellor identity.

Five Students' Stories

The first part of the following section provides the reader with the photos of the visual projects as well as the story grids of the five students' data. The analysis process that I followed in this chapter differs from the analysis process followed in chapters 2 and 3. I refer the reader back to chapter 1, where I have set out the process of the creation of the denotational inventory as well as the higher level of signification. I used a narrative analysis process to explore the students' reflections on their projects. The themes and patterns emerged from an integration of the visual analysis of the projects and the narrative analysis of the texts. I present the three levels of analysis in a grid format for each of the illustrative examples, and provide a photograph of each project. I conclude the section with an integrated narrative for each of these examples. I did not use a time line of past, present and future experiences in this instance as we are working with the product of counsellor identity as captured by a product in the present, although it is a temporal one. In the second section, I introduce the narrative themes and patterns that emerged from the analysis of all the students' projects and their reflections to the audience.

Participant: "Challenge" (Chappie) - Visual Project

Story Grid: "Challenge" (Chappie)

Denotational inventory	Signification	Students' reflection
One chappie wrapped in paper with frame around it.	The wrapper is essential protection and serves as information about what is on the inside.	She was wrapped in paper with her knowledge protecting her. She thought her skill as counsellor was dependent on this knowledge. During the course she realises that knowledge is important, but not essential. The course teaches her about different shades of grey and to be more comfortable with lack of fixed structure and rigid assumptions. She is now an expert in listening and introducing hope, not an expert on human beings. She can see that growth and change can take place without her, and that she can maybe assist the process. She also realises that it is an immense responsibility and remains in awe of the human spirit. She has learnt that in becoming flexible,

		she can reach greater heights of personal growth. She can grow from a rigid square to a vital life-filled bubble that can absorb and appreciate more of life.

Narrative Core

In the beginning of the course she experienced herself as rather rigid and judgmental and felt that her knowledge about people informed and protected her. Her knowledge system acted as a kind of protective wrapping that prevented her from becoming involved in self-reflection and also helped to keep other people out. She can now see how she has "unwrapped" herself by allowing her discourses to be challenged. She could start changing shape and colour and could learn about "the different shades of grey". She could become more flexible through the process of being chewed (by the course content). She specifically used chappies and not other foodstuff, because she felt that chappies were not consumed, but could also retain some of their original characteristics. In writing about her vision for herself as a counsellor, she can see that growth can take place without her – she is not the essential ingredient in counselling. Through letting go of her knowledge, she will be able to be a flexible counsellor. She can grow from a rigid square to a vital life-filled bubble that can absorb and appreciate more of life.

Challenge's narrative centres on the theme of moving from rigidity to flexibility, from a rigid square to a life-filled bubble. In this process, she had to let go of the protective nature of knowledge, and allow the process to create knowledges of difference within her. This is turn shaped her own self-concept and allowed her to become part of the counselling process instead of dictating the process in a certain direction. In the process of counselling and training, she finds a balance between being untouched and being consumed – she is able to remain herself.

Participant: "A-Thought-Provoking-Alternative" - Visual Project

Story Grid: "A-Thought-Provoking-Alternative"

Denotational inventory	Signification	Students' reflection
Framed picture of thin, static and naked female body. Words on frame: Thin descriptions; thin conclusions.	The thin naked female figure signifies her thin description of herself and other people.	She used to see herself as the professional in control of diagnosis and therapy. She comes to the conclusion that in most cases labelling has a disempowering effect on people.
Clothed doll in movement with skirt consisting of words: goals, competencies, attitudes.	The second figure is a richer description of people, which includes different aspects of being human.	She realises that skills, competencies, beliefs, values, commitments and abilities enable people to be experts in their lives and assists them to reduce the influence of the problem in their lives.
Open book.	The book might represent the fact that the narrative text has supported her in her new ways of thinking.	Therapy will be an opportunity for her to join her client's journey and conversations will be the road on this journey. Her role is collaborative in mapping the direction of this journey.

Narrative Core

In reflecting on her project, the student writes about her own history as a counsellor. In this history, she used the words "professional", "in control" and "diagnoses", to construct a certain meaning for the word *counsellor*. In her project, she uses two images of female figures that are contrasted with each other. The figure in the background is framed by the words "thin description, thin conclusion", and represents part of her past experiences as a counsellor but also as a person. In the course, A-Thought-Provoking-Alternative realises that labelling has a disempowering effect on people and that skills, competencies, beliefs, values, commitments and abilities empower people to become experts in their own lives. She knows that placing people in a position of expertise on their own lives assists them to reduce the influence of the problem.

The second female figure is colourful and stands on a book, which could refer to the empowerment that the student experienced through learning about narrative counselling. She is no longer naked but is dressed in the words "goals, competencies and abilities". This is a richer description of her as a person and as a counsellor. A-Thought-Provoking-Alternative sees her future as a counsellor no longer in terms of thin descriptions and conclusions, but as participating in a journey with the client, where conversations will be the different roads on this journey and her role one of collaboration and not diagnosis.

Participant: "Garden of Eden" (Snooky) - Visual Project

Story Grid: "Garden of Eden" (Snooky)

Denotational inventory	Signification	Students' reflection
Clay tree standing on grass and soil. Tree has roots, branches and leaves.	Tree is well grounded in the earth, signifies stability and nourishment. The tree shows signs of growth and production.	The tree is the growth that she has experienced and is a symbol of life and growth. Her roots are big and strong and embedded in the soil that is the basics and the grass that is the practice. The stem is thick and communicates who she is. The branches are the aspects she wants to develop. The narrative counselling course has allowed her branches to grow to a specific length but she needs more sun and a larger area to grab all the water that she can. The leaves of her tree are beautiful, meaning that they are satisfied and happy. They are happy because all their foundations are in place, meaning that they can continue with other aspects such as obtaining sunlight and water.
Green frog on leaf.	Frog reminds her of fairy tales where it hides your true nature; maybe a prince.	The little green frog signifies that all people must be accepted no matter who they are.
There is fruit on the tree and on the ground surrounding the tree.	The tree produces something that can be enjoyed and is a sign of getting enough nourishment.	The yellow fruit are aspects that are all the things that she has learned through the duration of the course. These fruits bring colour to her life and fill her tree.
Red chilli peppers.	Something that adds spice, but burns.	The chilli peppers describe the difficulties that she has experienced. They represent two specific aspects,

		namely, changing from psychoanalytic to narrative thinking and realising that she is not as open-minded as she thought she was.
Butterfly flying around the tree.	Butterflies are beautiful and are a symbol of freedom.	The blue butterfly is the freedom that everyone has to be themselves. She has learnt through the process of this course that she would always like her clients to have freedom because she believes that freedom brings empowerment.
Yellow pipe cleaner.	To clean with.	The pipe cleaner represents the interconnectedness between parts. Through seeing connections the client can discover their own ending, outcomes, fixes, etc, to their problem.

Narrative Core

In reflecting back on the course, the Garden of Eden comments on the fact that it was not just a course, but a living course. She uses a tree to symbolise who she was in this course and that she felt that she received the basic structure, soil and grass (theories and practice) in order to grow. Through this process she felt that the lecturer/therapist allowed her as a student and client to grow fruit (skills and knowledge) but also red chillies (letting go of psychodynamic thinking and becoming more open-minded). She speaks about the acceptance of others through the image of a frog and of freedom to be who you are in the image of a butterfly. She also feels that the narrative counselling module has allowed her branches to grow to a specific length but the she needs more sun and a larger area to grab all the water that she can in order to increase her knowledge.

She concludes by saying that in doing this project she could externalise all the negative and positive aspects in such a way that she can observe the processes that were connected to her inner self through the module. She feels that this module, more that any other, has had a therapeutic effect on her because it allowed her to learn firsthand in a very practical manner.

Participant: "The Guide" - Visual Project

Story Grid: "The Guide"

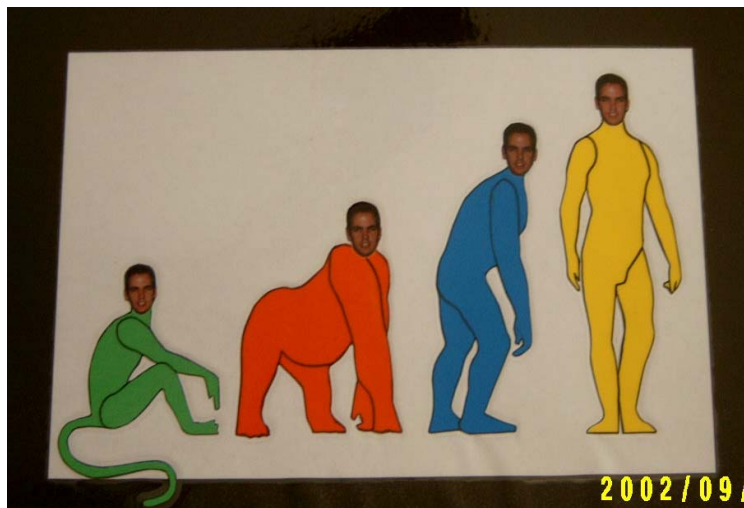| Denotational inventory	Signification	Students' reflection
Thick stemmed tree with leaves on standing in soil against the background of the sky.	The tree illustrates being alive. Stability in being rooted. Life as seen in the green leaves.	The painting reads from the top to the bottom, and the space from top to bottom is the year that it has taken for the tree that is counsellor identity to mature and grow stronger The tree is grounded in a soil of self-awareness and experiences. It is fed with the droplets and leaves that fall.
Drops falling from the sky Some drops are enlarged.	Water is nourishment for the tree. Some drops are more significant that others in terms of the tree's growth.	The water droplets are self-knowledge, new ideas, opinions and insight. The enlarged blocks she calls introspection. Introspection caused her to examine these droplets more closely. The bigger droplets are improved self-knowledge, new ideas and approaches. The droplets change into slowly downwards drifting leaves. The solid, defined and alive leaves drift ever lower. Some fall on the

		ground, but most join the tree that is her identity as a counsellor. The tree is now grounded in self-awareness and experiences and will grow as time passes.

Narrative Core

The Guide uses a painting of a tree to illustrate her personal growth as a counsellor in the past year. She writes that the tree is grounded in a soil of self-awareness and experiences and is fed with droplets and leaves that fall. The water droplets that fed the tree throughout the year are self-knowledge, new ideas and insight. Sometimes she had to examine these droplets more closely through a process of introspection and most droplets were combined to become bigger, more solid and defined concepts of self-knowledge, new ideas and approaches. These droplets slowly changed into leaves where most of them join the tree that is her identity as a counsellor.

The young strong tree in the painting is unrecognisable as the sapling that it was at the beginning of the year.

Participant: "The Evolution" (The Coin) - Visual Project

Story Grid: "The Evolution" (The Coin)

Denotational inventory	Signification	Students' reflection
Four figures with photo of student's face on. The figures are portrayed in an evolutionary process.	Signifies development.	The main purpose of the drawing is to illustrate the influence narrative therapy has had on his growth as a counsellor. This course has guided him through a process in which he passed through various stages. The monkey stage: thrilled at the prospect of learning about a new approach. Not so happy gorilla stage: When they were expected to apply it in role plays. Prehistoric man stage: This stage was riddled with frustration. Trying to apply and get his head around the concepts of narrative therapy was harder than he expected. The millennium man stage: This is where he is today. He feels strong and is willing to give it all he has. He realised that the only way he was going to grow and learn was by taking risks and moving from his comfort zone into his stretch zone.

Narrative Core

The Evolution wrote that his monkey stage occurred in the beginning of the year when he was excited and eager to learn a new approach to counselling. He moved on to the not-so-happy gorilla stage when they were expected to apply their learning in role plays, and when he had to expose himself. This vulnerability made him defensive and stubborn, but he admits that he was actually scared. With continuous involvement and reflection, however, he was able to move through this stage and into the prehistoric man stage. This was again riddled with frustration as applying the concepts of narrative therapy was harder than he had expected. This

changed when he volunteered to be the counsellor in a role play and it was as if this allowed him to stand up tall as opposed to the hunched-over posture he had assumed during the previous stage. The final stage is the millennium man where he is today. Being the counsellor in the role play, he realised that the only way he was going to grow and learn was by taking risks and moving from his comfort zone into his stretch zone.

The module showed him that things do not happen overnight and he realised that sometimes he just had to persevere to end up standing straight. As a counsellor this process gave him courage and made him believe in himself and in his abilities. It has allowed him to look at counselling from another perspective and this has contributed tremendously to his growth as a counsellor.

Duet: Narratives of Counsellor Identity (Construction in Process)

Introduction

In this section, I will introduce the common melodic themes and patterns which became clearer in the analysis of the projects and the reflections of the students. In analysing the visual projects on a denotational level, just looking at the constituents systematically and in a literal sense, the central theme was one of **construction-in-process**. When looking at the projects on the level of higher signification, the central theme is "a putting together of different pieces to create a visual image". In the context of this study, this visual image had the meaning of counsellor identity. This also relates to the argument that identity is not only achieved through the conceptual components of narratives but that narrative forms are in themselves ways of self-portraying (Gergen, 2001). It is therefore necessary to take into account the form, which is the literal project, as well as the narratives of meaning which relate to the higher levels of signification.

In the narrative analysis of the students' reflections on their projects, five narratives used in constructing counsellor identity were identified. As I concern myself in this chapter and in this study with the process of construction of counsellor identity, rather than the end product, I will discuss these narratives as elements of the construction process. They are narratives of capacity for uncertainty; increased self-knowledge; self-reflection; growth, change and hope. It is important here to remember

that from a social constructionist viewpoint, certain contexts provide certain narratives with which we can build our identities. The co-construction of the training process made these narratives available as building material for stories about preferred counsellor identity (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988; Kvale, 1992; Shotter, 1992).

I will start this duet with the quote from Berger and Luckmann (1967) who state that "while it is possible to say that man has a nature, it is more significant to say that man constructs his own nature, or more simply, that man produces himself" (p.49), and add to this the relational and linguistic space that a postmodern framework provides for this construction process of self (Anderson, 1997; Anderson & Goolishian 1992; Bruffee, 1986; Gergen, 1991; 1994; Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988; Kvale, 1992; Shotter, 1992). In looking at the students' projects, which were the response to a request to make an image of their counsellor identity, it became clear that they viewed identity as something that is constructed; but more importantly, they saw it as something that is always in the process of being constructed. From a postmodern perspective identity is not conceived as something stable (Burr, 1995; Gergen 1991, 1994), but is seen as in a process of continuous construction.

This process of identity construction is seen as taking place in a relational context where dialogue through language constructs knowledge as well as personal identity (Sampson, 1989) and identity is seen as possessing dialogical qualities (Josselson & Lieblich, 1995; Shotter, 1995). Dialogical qualities also imply a two-way process where self and context are in interaction and the construction of the one impacts on the construction of the other (Els & Shoeman, 2000; Gover, 2003). The context in which this process of identity construction took place is a training context of repositioning that enables and encourages students to language counsellor identity. As the training context encouraged this dialogue, it became a process of continuous constructions: as the students and trainer constructed their identities through the narratives that became available in the training process, the training process was constructed through the narratives that the trainer and students made available. Bamberg (2004) writes about the fact that that positions are constructed in languaging practices, and that it is important to analyse how they assist in the construction of identities. The following section thus explores counsellor self as a multilevelled narrative identity.

Self as Multilevelled Narration

Returning to the construction-in-process nature of the students' projects, it was interesting to note that many of the visual constructions consisted of different parts, each of which contributed to the whole picture. Sometimes they were put together as an end product, and sometimes they were in a process of moving towards a next level of integration. Each of these parts was seen as part of the students' identity as counsellors, yet could also be seen as a different facet of who they were. Their conceptualisation of identity can be contrasted with the conceptualisation of the modern self as unitary and integrated (Cushman, 1990, Hoskins & Leseho, 1996; Sampson, 1988) and seems to fit better within a postmodern view of self as a multilevelled text (Sampson, 1989), where people are viewed as a community of selves and each story is associated with a particular sense of self (Allen & Allen, 1995). Self then consists of multiple provisional possibilities which are continuously revealed in different social contexts and exchanges (Gergen, 1991).

Writing about the construction process of counsellor identity is a process that takes us into the languaging practices through which these identities are constructed. Gover (2003) identifies five dimensions from which narrative and identity emerge. The artefact dimension implies that in constituting identity individuals take up certain aspects of their world (e.g., language, behaviour and gesture) which provide the material for construction of identity.

In my writing process the metaphor of self-as-narrative-author affords the students the possibility of telling their own stories. In so doing, they made sense, found coherence and actively constructed their counsellor identities. This confirms the usefulness of using a narrative metaphor as it carries the context in which the narrative makes sense (Bruner 1986; Hoskins & Leseho, 1996; McAdams, 1993; Murray, 2003). In this study, the stories of the students were provided by both the cultural and the personal stories of their lives (Howard, 1991, Murray, 2003). This relates to Widdershoven's (1993) understanding that stories exist within a specific contextual frame, with each frame having its own set of constructional possibilities which impacts on which stories are told as well as how they are told.

Narrative 1: Capacity for Uncertainty

In the students' reflections on their projects, as well as through the being-constructed nature of many of the projects, they wrote stories about their developing capacity for uncertainty and of being more comfortable in not achieving an end point or specified outcome.

> I experienced my therapeutic development to be roads on a journey. I embarked on a very uncertain journey at the beginning of the year, not knowing where I am going or where the journey in narrative therapy would lead me. I had to take up the courage to challenge beliefs and discourses that I had internalised, concerning therapy and helping relationships in general. I was very uncomfortable with some of the ideas at first…

Initially the students were very unsure about this type of counselling and thought that it could not work if the counsellor and the client are on the same level. New language practices contributed to their sense of being in a different psychology country. They experienced feelings of confusion, restlessness and a sense of being lost as they realised that the discourses that they have accepted without question are actually discourses relative to a context. The results of this were that many of the students' frames of reference in which identity and functioning were based became uncertain and vague. One student wrote:

> ….during the process of change, mixed feelings occur. Said perception of risk is a very personal thing that influences when and if the person is willing to change. Feelings with regard to competence, values, success and relationships all come into question. The immersing in the change process exposes the client over and over to the severe conflict between present emotional pain and future uncertainty

Narrative 2: Increased Self-Knowledge

Despite their scepticism, the students continued to learn more and more about themselves and discovered aspects of them that gave a new dimension to their lives. They were often scared of the unknown, but became more and more comfortable, which made it possible for them to see and appreciate their growth. On reflecting back they thought that it was exactly the new and different learning environment that

facilitated their active and greater than usual participation. They could learn to be more comfortable with the lack of a fixed structure and came to believe that life can still be liveable without rigid assumptions. In their discomfort, they also experienced parts of themselves that they had not previously experienced, which made them aware of the fact that they did not know themselves as well as they thought they did.

Narrative 3: Self-Reflection

Students used the narrative of self-reflection in the telling of their identity stories. For them, learning and using the narrative of self-reflection was a valuable experience as they had to look at their doubts, strong points, emotional experiences and behaviour. They had to be honest and "naked" but also realised that they had to explore these issues in their own lives as they would impact on the counselling relationship. Self-reflection was therefore not always an easy narrative to use as part of their counsellor identity, as some of the discourses that were present and operating in their lives took time and deep introspection to deconstruct and repack in a manner that serves them better.

Through performing the narrative of self-reflection on a continuous basis, they could see that the only tool they have in counselling is themselves. They were ready to explore "the adventure that is me in this course". They felt that the course not only changed and developed them as counsellors, but also developed them as human beings. In this parallel process, they felt that their lives as a counsellors are part of who they are and the ways in which they define themselves.

The narrative of self-reflection that was present in the students' self-constructions made it possible for them to become aware of and choose between different positions (Kolb, 1986). In the possibility of moving between positions, they could then actively shape their lives in the ever-changing sociocultural context that South Africa provides (Els & Schoeman, 2000). As counselling always take place within a certain cultural context, self-reflection as a skill for repositioning in contexts appears to be a useful and important part of counsellor identity. Van Schalkwyk et al. (2002) emphasise that the ability to self-reflect is a necessary skill for working in counselling contexts in South Africa.

Narrative 4: Growth

The way in which the students used the narrative of growth in their storying of counsellor identity makes it clear that the distinction between professional and personal no longer applies. The students felt that their growth as counsellors was also reflected in their personal growth experiences. They could see that the personal and the professional were woven into the texture of being human.

In learning to be flexible on a theoretical level, they could reach greater heights of personal growth and be more open to appreciating more of life. They felt that their growth experiences could not be found in textbooks and that the majority of the growth in training lies in personal experiences. These experiences enabled them to see more clearly the silhouette of themselves as counsellors. Seeing more clearly also meant building confidence in their counselling style. A student said:

> …the course really showed me that things don't happen overnight and sometimes one must just persevere and you will end up standing straight. As a counsellor it gave me courage and made me believe in myself and in my abilities. It has allowed me to look at counselling from another perspective and this has contributed tremendously to my growth as a counsellor and it has equipped me with additional skills.

In using the narrative of growth in constructing their counsellor identities, the students employed various metaphors, such as the following example:

> When thinking about my life and its meaning I like to use the analogy of a puzzle. Every person's life is a puzzle that grows in size from the time we are born. Every experience and every person with whom someone comes in contact, contributes a piece to the puzzle, to make it more meaningful and complete. When pieces are passed onto others, a relationship is formed and so we become part of each other's lives. I am fortunate that I have yet another few puzzle pieces that have been built as a result of this course to enrich my life

Narrative 5: Change and Hope

In the process of constructing their counsellor identities, the students used the narrative of change and hope as part of the construction-in-process. This is one student's story about change:

…life is about change and change necessitates risks. Sometimes risks prompt change. Either way change happens. The following common European saying epitomises the change process. "If you step into deep water, keep your mouth shut". The wisdom being that when you find yourself in a different or alien situation, expect to have to do something different to what you usually do, if you survive to tell the tale. Therefore we can conclude that it is the existence of difference that prompts personal growth. And that change of something is needed to survive.

In the beginning of the process, the students found that change could have quite an impact on their lives as they had to let go of old ways of thinking and adjust to different ways of thinking and doing. The change did not happen without resistance, as it required them to move into new and undiscovered terrain. Once they could start using the narrative of change and hope in their construction process, they experienced it as a powerful and positive process in their life stories; a process that invited hope. They felt that narrative counselling represented hope through change, and that hope was an integral part of the language practices in narrative counselling. This is because externalising makes it possible to see alternatives and to language unique outcomes.

The narrative of change also helped the students to be open to learning about a new attitude towards psychology and the counselling process. This led to the realisation that there was no magic formula in counselling, but that in their ability to change, they themselves were the most important magical formula in counselling. This is one story:

My work should be an extension of myself. I am a therapeutic instrument. I have grown to realise that I can't observe people from behind a mask or hide my characteristics as a person. I am part of the therapeutic process and I have to fulfil my role to the fullest.

In their narratives of change and growth, which occurred in a context of uncertainty, students were able to change from one position to another as the context changed (Hermans et al., 1992). Their narratives of change and growth within a context of uncertainty are progressive narratives which challenge stable and perpetuating social systems that easily inhibit and limit the forming of preferred self-narratives (Gergen & Gergen, 1997). If the counsellor can occupy a position of uncertainty, and embrace change and growth as an identity position, this could facilitate growth and change in the client. Els and Shoeman (2000) state that clients are continuously in different situations and relationships in the changing contexts of their lives and counsellors should be trained "to cope with their own as well as the clients' difficulty to manage this change" (p.48).

It is not only the experience of uncertainty, change and growth in training programmes, but also the capacity to live with and through these narratives, that equip counsellors with the ability to co-author clients' preferred life narratives.

The Writing Story of Chapter 4

Learning to Dance

Few things in life are fatal.

This is and has been my life philosophy for almost 25 years. My life story created a context in which I had to reposition in order to live life as fully as possible. This always felt to me like learning to dance – in the beginning the movement between different positions was awkward and difficult and as I became more skilled, the movements between positions were increasingly fluent and comfortable.

It is from this position of being familiar with and skilled in moving around in my life that I wrote this chapter on identity. As is evident in the modest space allocated to more traditional and modern viewpoints on self, personality and identity, I did not find these useful in thinking about the topic of the process of constructing identity. I am aware of the fact that this limited representation of traditional theory might also limit the dialogue between the literature and the students' stories. However, it also provided the space for a richer conversation between postmodern conceptualisations of self and the students' stories, and allowed me to write about the students' counsellor narratives as different positions that are not separate, but part of

their dance of being a counsellor. Luckily *few things in life are fatal* and I am left with a sense of hope that an alternative story for counselling in South Africa is possible.

A Student's Reflections on Chapter 4

Reading this chapter on the construction of counsellor identity made me extremely excited about the creative and alternative counsellor identities that are being narrated in South Africa today. This postmodern and ever-changing construction of counsellor identity makes room for endless possibilities in the therapeutic process. In my view it allows the human spirit limitless and unique opportunities to recognise their different selves and to find solutions to their unique stories, in ways that were never thought possible before.

I read this text as a story being told and it resonated with my own experience as a student in narrative psychology and counsellor-to-be. To me, being introduced to narrative psychology as a student meant opening up new ways of thinking and being. It gave me freedom from a universal will or something I "ought to be". I identified with my fellow students' experiences of uncertainty, but also with experiences of enlightenment and stretching beyond comfort zones, from thin descriptions to a richer and fuller journey in collaboration with the client.

In the process of reading this text I was filled with many a-ha moments, as I came to insights and awareness in myself that I had not yet languaged. One of these insights is that identity is a by-product of narratives, as narratives are in themselves ways of self-portraying. This has added valuable learning to my own narrative as a counsellor in construction. The different narratives that the students portrayed on counsellor identity were not all ideas that I experienced as a counsellor in process. But that is the beauty of it. Each person has a unique experience and story to tell and must be allowed the freedom to create their own counsellor identity.

Something that especially resonated within me was the fact that this way of thinking allows for the human side of being a counsellor to emerge, and that professional and personal experiences and identities do not have to be completely separated. It is a relief to be able to admit that although being a psychologist is one preferred way of being for me, I am also struggling with different preferred ways of being. In my view, this way of thinking makes the counselling process more holistic

and real, as the counsellor is not exclusively a professional. You are able to remain yourself, a whole person, with problems and life experiences of your own.

Another theme that I can also identify with in the students' portrayals of counsellor identity is the theme of uncertainty and change. One of the things that I have always believed is that, however hard it may be, change is the only permanency in life. In my life it has been mostly in times of change and uncertainty when new experiences and realities have come into being. Although this may seem daunting and unsafe, it allows for an ever-changing construction of our identities within ever-changing contexts and narratives. In my opinion it is a freedom and a new creative way of living and working that we have not yet begun to grasp.

CHAPTER 5

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PROGRAMME

Introduction

In chapter 1 I wrote that it is in the ever-continuing relationship between product and process that the heart of social constructionist studies lies. In this study, narrative and visual texts were produced within the referential context of processes described in chapter 1, and they were analysed in an attempt to answer the research question: in what way did the training context and practices contribute to the construction of counsellor identity? In this chapter I briefly highlight the narrative themes that emerged within the different relational processes that were present in this training context.

Training Context

An Alignment of Epistemology and Practice

In the literature study on the orientation of training programmes and the training of counselling skills in terms of content and pedagogy, it became clear that these different components (orientation, content and pedagogy) of the training process are not aligned in terms of consistent epistemology and practice across these different aspects. This situation persists in spite of the fact that various authors (e.g., Bor & Watts, 1999; Cantwell and Holmes, 1994; Dryden & Feltham, 1994; Wendorf, 1984) have suggested such an alignment.

This research project has indicated that an alignment can be achieved in the following ways:

- by utilising the trainer/student relationship as a reflection of the theoretical orientation of the course content
- through the use of specific language practices that encourages a constructional view of knowledge
- through the re-evaluation of evaluation as a process-based rather than an outcome-based activity

Repositioning in the Trainer/Student Relationship

If we accept the idea of language as constructional instrument and the conceptualisation of grand narratives as frameworks within which certain narratives about self or identity can or cannot be narrated (Doan, 1997; Freedman & Combs, 1996; Weingarten, 1998), then the contribution of this research lies in the guidelines it may provide for creating training frameworks/contexts within which narratives of repositioning can be told.

In this research it became clear that when trainers engage in the relationship with students from an informal and non-expert position, then students are able to position themselves as actively participating adults in their own learning process (Souza, 2002; Usher & Edwards, 1994). This position encourages students to prepare, be present, participate and take responsibility.

Strategies to facilitate this repositioning have been suggested in the research text, but need to be developed within and adapted to specific training programmes and contexts. Within the context of training counsellors in narrative counselling processes and practices, the position of the narrative counsellor as co-author, and a not-knowing position (Anderson & Goolishian, 1992) informed the trainer position to a large extent. In adopting this stance, the trainer position then illustrates the principles contained in the content of the learning material, thereby enhancing the extent of alignment between pedagogy and content.

When the relationship between trainer and student encourages the individuals in the relationship to reconsider their positions, a context is created where they can practice and develop their skills in repositioning. A more active and participatory student position facilitates personal engagement with the learning material through an increase in both self-reflective practices and self-awareness practices. Through these processes students develop an appreciation for the contextual nature of knowledge; and they are able to replace the criterion of "truth" with the criteria of "relevance and pragmatic use" when thinking about knowledge and realities within people's life contexts. Again, this conceptualisation of the process of knowledge production mirrors the narrative counselling process where the counselling dialogue creates meaning in the conversational context between counsellor and client.

The relevance of the concept of repositioning in the exploration of identity construction is highlighted in the work of Bamberg (2004), Hermans et al. (1992) and Gergen (1991). These authors work from the premise that multiple I-positions are constructed in language, and that it is important to analyse this process of construction and how these positions in turn assist in the construction and conceptualisation of a sense of identity as being multilevelled.

Repositioning of individuals, and in the context of this research, counsellors, provides and maintains the "relevant-to-context" quality of life narratives within any given culture. The ability to reposition can be conceptualised as a relevant and necessary skill within postmodern societies today. Gergen (1991) and White (1991) state that in the process of becoming familiar with repositioning it becomes possible to acknowledge the other and the role they play in the constant and continuous construction of the self. The changing nature of the social, political and cultural context in South Africa requires a repositioning of individuals within this context. More specifically, with specific relevance to this research, the country requires a repositioning of psychological service providers. Various authors within the field of counselling and counselling training have commented on helpfulness of these abilities when situating counsellors and counselling training within postmodern social contexts (Donald, 1991; Kriegler, 1993; Parham, 1996; Smith, 1993; Van Schalkwyk et al., 2002; Weingarten, 1993).

Language Practices

A social constructionist understanding of educational practices views knowledge as being in a constant state of construction and transformation, and sees learning as an ongoing activity of engaging in inquiry and problem solving. Within such an understanding it is necessary to engage in language practices that will encourage dialogical encounters between trainers and students, in contrast with a process of talking and listening (Peterson, 1994; Sprague, 1992).

Social constructionism also views knowledge and its relationship to learning as existing within an interpersonal context (Souza, 2002), which in this research is the repositioned relationship between trainer and student. It is therefore necessary to employ language practices that are congruent within this relationship as well as within the social constructionist view of processes of knowledge production.

In the analysis of the narratives it became clear that the use of externalising language practices in training contexts encourages students to actively position themselves in terms of the content of the learning material. These language practices facilitate the process of de-construction and re-construction of knowledge towards a co-construction of knowledge that is relevant to students' life contexts. During this process, students are able to explore their relationship with the learning material, which facilitates a critical engagement through self-reflective practices. Learning then becomes a collaborative activity between trainer and student.

Process-based Evaluation

In a social constructionist training framework the development of skills is not seen as separate from the conceptualisation of identity, but is viewed as contributing towards a specific and preferred self-construction. In this research, the self-construction is related to the development of counsellor identity. A training context that facilitates the development of repositioning skills thus not only allows for the process of knowledge construction, but also allows for the process of constructing preferred selves in relation to the learning material.

Within this conceptualisation of training as context for self-construction, it is not enough to evaluate the final outcome, but it is essential to also evaluate the relationship process of constructing the self (Anderson, 1997; Anderson & Goolishian 1992; Bruffee, 1986; Burr, 1995; Gergen, 1991, 1994, 1995; Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988; Kvale, 1992; Shotter, 1992). Evaluation now needs to become an activity of attending to identity as multilevelled text (Sampson, 1989), which is continuously narrated in different social contexts through the language practices that are employed in these contexts (Gergen, 1991). In this conceptualisation, the definition of outcomes is no longer about the acquisition of a certain set of skills and a body of knowledge, but concerns itself with the process of specific self-constructions that are relevant to the training context. In this way, outcome too becomes a shared responsibility between trainer and student, for both of these positions contribute to the context and the possibilities and limitations contained within this context (Widdershoven, 1993).

A Melody for the Drive Home

A repositioning of trainers and students, the use of language practices that encourages a critical engagement in knowledge and self-production, and a re-evaluation of the process of evaluation in training all contributed to the construction of counsellor identities that contained the narratives of uncertainty, self-awareness, growth, change, hope and respect for individual life narratives. These are all familiar narratives in the South African context. We live in a country that is in a continuous process of change and where certainty is an elusive concept. If we can assist people with the co-authoring of skills to reposition themselves to grow and change, it may become possible for the story of respect for individual life narratives to be told.

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