

**The selection paradox: Selecting and evaluating trainee
psychologists in the context of narrative theory**

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ABSTRACT

Psychology has become an increasingly popular discipline for study in the South African context, with the number of students enrolling for courses increasing rapidly. The selection and evaluation of trainee psychologists is a complex and contested issue. With so few students reaching Masters level and the changing needs of the South African context, it becomes imperative that only the most suitable candidates are selected for entry into the field of professional psychology. This study focuses on the selection process of trainee psychologists at an institution that incorporates the narrative philosophy in both the selection and training of candidates. The question is raised, whether it is possible to utilize narrative principles in a process that is intended to judge and evaluate candidates? This presents a paradox. The paradox is illuminated in both the intentions behind the narrative questions in the application form and in the candidates' experiences of responding to these. The conclusion reached is that the narrative philosophy makes for an enriching and creative experience of the selection process for candidates but this however, does not ameliorate the negative effects of evaluation and the 'gaze'.

INTRODUCTION

Many writers have drawn attention to the popularity of psychology as a major discipline of study. According to Richter, Griesel, Durrheim, Wilson, Surendorff and Asafo-Agyei (1998), there has been an extremely rapid growth in the number of students majoring in psychology from the mid 1970's in South Africa. At the end of 1996, there were 4 303 registered psychologists in South Africa (Richter et al, 1998). Despite the great interest in psychology at university level reflected by the large number of students enrolled for courses in psychology, there appears to have been little comprehensive investigation on the selection and training of South African psychologists (Van Der Westhuyzen, 1987).

Tyson (1987), stresses that, in studying others, the responsible psychologist should safeguard their rights and protect them from harm. Therefore a major responsibility rests on the psychology departments in training institutions to select appropriate candidates for entrance into the field as professional practitioners. Goldberg (1991), emphasizes the need for penetrating examination of the backgrounds of those who practice psychotherapy, because of the enormous responsibility of the profession in providing therapeutic assistance to individuals.

Of relevance to the current context of a democratic South Africa, Pillay and Freeman (1996), in their paper entitled *Mental Health Policy and Planning: Continuing the Debate*, outline the National Psychology Development Programme put forward by Rock and Hamber (cited in Smith, 2000), for the Professional Board for Psychology. The programme focused on the need for a new vision for psychology in South Africa based on the following issues:

- * psychology should be undisputedly relevant in South Africa
- * psychology should no longer reflect the disparities of apartheid
- * psychology should address the mental health needs of South Africans
- * psychology should find ways to address the shortfall of psychology services
- * psychology should address the training of psychologists and how to meet the needs of the population

* psychology should develop into a richly diverse discipline which is guided by strong, stable organizations with significant social power

The above issues stress the importance of the selection and training of psychologists. Given the above, it becomes of primary significance to select trainee psychologists who are committed to the current South African context and who are sensitive to the diverse population of the country. Universities adopt their own selection processes and criteria in accordance with their own framework and philosophy.

The major psychological fields of specialization in South Africa are clinical psychology, counselling psychology, industrial psychology, educational psychology and research psychology. Intending psychologists receive their training at universities and may specialize in any one of the above fields. The university degree required by all of the specializations mentioned above is a Master's degree.

I have recently experienced the selection process for a Masters degree in Counselling Psychology as a psychologist in training at the department under study. My personal experience of the selection process and interest in narrative therapy has motivated me to embark on this study. The study addresses issues around using narrative theory and practice in the selection of trainee psychologists. The study explored the experiences of candidates who applied to read for a Masters degree in Counselling Psychology at the department of psychology of a South African training institution and compared their experience with the intention of the department in employing Narrative theory in the first part of the selection process.

In recognition of the diverse context of South Africa, the psychology department under study employed a Narrative theoretical framework in the selection and training of candidates over the past few years. Narrative therapy belongs to a relatively new group of therapies that align themselves with the philosophy of social constructionism (Monk & Winslade, 1997). Social Constructionism, according to Burr (1995), is born out of the cultural and intellectual framework of postmodernism. The Narrative approach focuses

on assisting people to discover their own voices and to re-author their lives in ways that are meaningful to them. The aim of Narrative therapy is not to label or to construct realities for people-realities as understood by the institution/therapist. The intention of the narrative approach, according to Epston (1999), is to enrol people in their own knowledges which effectively privileges and respects peoples' unique attributes and skills about their lives, as opposed to the questioner coming from the position of "expert".

The writer argues that the use of a Narrative theoretical framework by the institution under study is creative and innovative making the selection process an enriching experience for the applicants. However, narrative philosophy informing the selection process presents a paradox. The very nature of selection is an evaluative one which does not eliminate the effects of 'the gaze'. Evaluation itself requires an assessment and value judgement by the 'other' thus creating tension and unease for the 'subject' (White, 1990). This study highlights the unintended outcomes of the selection process as a paradox.

CONTEXT: PSYCHOLOGY AS A DISCIPLINE AND PROFESSION

According to Tyson (1987, p.4) the term psychology originally meant "the study of the soul". However, towards the latter half of the nineteenth century psychology stepped into a new era, -as scientific psychology. As a discipline, psychology began to focus on the study of the behaviour and experience of the individual. As a profession, university departments of psychology became the places where intending psychologists received their training.

Van der Westhuyzen (1987, p.165) claims that the Boulder Conference in 1949 in the USA marked a turning point in the development of psychology as a profession. At this conference, it was recommended that training programmes should be structured to deliver scientific-professional psychologists, through education and training in which research and applications would be equally important. He adds that the scientific-professional training model also gained acceptance in South Africa, as appears from the

combination of academic, practical and research training in Clinical, Counselling, Educational and Industrial and Research Psychology at the Masters degree level.

A brief history of psychology as a profession in South Africa shows that psychology was taught as a separate discipline from 1917 (Louw, in Richter et al., 1998). The first sub-department of Psychology was established in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Stellenbosch. The first independent department was founded at Rhodes University in 1926. The first society of psychologists, the South African Psychological Association, was formed in 1948. In 1964 legislation was passed which made the voluntary certification of psychologists possible and psychology became a recognized profession in 1974 with the promulgation of Act 56, The Medical, Dental and Supplementary Health Service Professions Act. This act restricted both the title psychologist and specific diagnostic and therapeutic activities to registered professionals (Richter et al., 1998).

The 1998 Policy on Roles, Registration/Licensing, Training and Education within the Professional Field of Psychology, put forward by the Professional Board for Psychology and the Psychological Society of Southern Africa, highlighted, amongst other things, the demand for psychologists and psychological services (Smith, 2000). There was a rapid growth in students majoring in psychology and the ratio of therapeutic psychologists to the population is 1:13. Given that the majority of these services are available in the private rather than public sector and are rendered in traditionally middle-class areas, the unmet need for therapeutic and other psychological services in the population is easy to comprehend. (Richter et al., 1998).

THE SELECTION PROCESS

The popularity of psychology, the unmet need for therapeutic and allied psychological services and the new vision for psychology as outlined by the National Psychology Development Programme have implications for the selection process and places demands

on institutions to select appropriate candidates as trainee psychologists. The selection of applicants for professional training by means of directed Master's degrees in South Africa is reflected in the table below. One of the few national studies on selection was conducted by Van der Westhuyzen & Plug, (1987). The results are as follows:

 THE NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS RECEIVED AND ACCEPTED FOR
 MASTER'S TRAINING IN FOUR CATEGORIES

Category	Departments	Total	Range	Number accepted	% Rejected
Clinical	6	158	15-50	38	76
Counselling	6	99	2-27	30	70
Educational	3	40	12-15	22	45
Industrial	5	110	1-45	103	6

 As can be seen from the table, rejection rates are especially high for clinical and counselling psychology courses. According to Van der Westhuyzen & Plug, (1987), the reasons provided for the rejection of candidates include limited work opportunities for trained professionals, demands for trainees of a very high standard, a limited number of internships available to departments, and a shortage of manpower for specialized training.

Gilbert (2002) states that, the selection process is generally experienced by trainees as challenging and consequently, the number of students post Honours level is reduced. The stringent selection process reduces a highly motivated and expectant pool of students and this competitive process of selection sees candidates applying to multiple sites in order to be accepted. Hence the process of selection is a complex and difficult one in that the outcome has significant consequences for the future of the applicants.

The professional selection process of trainee psychologists is not based solely on academic criteria but on suitability to be a psychologist. Gilbert (2002) added that the criteria for the selection of candidates is a discretionary issue that individual psychology departments develop in line with their situational context, therapeutic modalities and theoretical philosophies. A Masters degree and registration with the Professional Board is necessary for professional practice. The qualification required for registration is a Masters degree plus 12 months internship at an accredited institution. The training period as a psychologist thus takes a minimum of 6 years, although a considerable number of trainees take a year or two longer. Psychologists register in one of several categories, namely, Clinical, Counselling, Educational, Industrial and Research.

Van der Westhuyzen & Plug, (1987) outlines the evaluation and selection of applicants for professional training in most psychology departments in South Africa as including some of the following components:

- Stage 1: Application form
 - Candidates write a brief autobiography
 - Reports of referees
- Stage 2: Personal interview
 - Observation of applicants' interpersonal skills and role-play & leadership groups
 - Personality assessment
 - Presentation and evaluation of cases by applicants
 - Evaluation of video-taped therapeutic interviews by applicants
- Stage 3: Final selection panel

Van der Westhuyzen & Plug, (1987), claims that the general requirements for admission to professional training as surprisingly similar in different training institutions. In practically all the institutions the following criteria were relevant:

- (a) good academic record

(b) adequate interpersonal skills

(c) a personality characterized by sensitivity, openness, flexibility, empathy, warmth, internal congruence, maturity/stability, and ability to deal with anxiety and conflict, and acceptable values.

THE PSYCHOLOGY DEPARTMENT OF THE TRAINING INSTITUTION UNDER STUDY

The psychology department featured in this study (hereafter referred to as the psychology department) followed the process outlined by Van der Westhuyzen & Plug, (1987) fairly closely. The focus of this study is located within the first stage of the above outline. At this point in the selection process, candidates were asked to respond to certain questions that were crafted and shaped by narrative intentions on the part of the department. The questions are referred to as the 'narrative questions' for the purposes of this paper.

The psychology department under study is a recognized training site by the Professional Board of Psychology. It runs a two-year Masters in Counselling Psychology Degree in which year 1 comprises a theoretical component and year 2 involves an internship programme at various professional sites focused on Community Mental Health. An intake of 6-8 Masters students is registered every second year. The psychology department's selection process involves different aspects of evaluation. The first is the candidate's written application form in which he/she answers the questions as put forward by the psychology department, including the narrative questions. Based on the answers to this application form, the department selects a number of candidates to go through to the next level of evaluation. The next level includes a series of in-depth interviews, role-play with other candidates and panel interviews. Based on the candidate's performance at this level, candidates are selected for admission to the Masters Degree in Counselling Psychology.

The selection and training of candidates is guided by the social constructionist theoretical framework incorporating the narrative philosophy and practice and the aim of the Department is to maintain consistency between the philosophy of the Masters programme and the way in which selection of candidates is carried out.

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM AND THE NARRATIVE APPROACH

According to Burr (1995), social constructionism takes a critical stance towards taken-for-granted knowledge and challenges the view that conventional knowledge is based upon objective, unbiased observation of the world. The ways in which the world is commonly understood and the categories and concepts utilized are dependent on historical and cultural contexts.

She asserts that knowledge of the world is sustained by social processes occurring between people in the course of life. The daily interaction that takes place between people is how versions of knowledge become fabricated/constructed. Therefore, social interaction and language in particular, is of utmost importance to social constructionists. Each different construction invites a different kind of action from human beings and therefore, social action and knowledge go together.

Within the framework of social constructionism, narrative therapy is seen as one of a relatively new group of therapies (Monk & Winsdale, 1997). Within the narrative approach, helpers are interested in knowing about the meanings people have constructed about themselves on the basis of their lived experiences in the world and these stories serve a meaning-making function. White (1997, p.28) points out that people are seen as making sense of their lives by assembling significant events together into a series of dominant plots. Meaning is thus constructed through 'storying lived experiences', in that persons live their lives by stories. These stories are shaping of life, and have real effects and provide the structure of life.

This paper is informed by the following components of narrative theory that guide practice in general and the selection process of the psychology department in particular:

1) The power of language

The importance and power of language cannot be underestimated within the narrative and social constructionist approach. Language is a pre-condition for thought, persons are born into a world where certain conceptual frameworks and categories already exist (Burr, 1997). So, the way a person speaks and thinks, the categories and descriptions they have at their disposal, are provided by the language they use. According to White (1999), language allows people to stand in different territories of their lives, territories that differently construct their identities and in which different knowledges and skills of living become available for exploration.

Roberts (1994), claims that in language, the person with the greatest linguistic abilities is likely to have a greater influence and control on the structure and sequence of talk. Bentham's Panopticon and the concept of the 'gaze' as described by White (1991), is a useful metaphor to illustrate the idea of power and control as embedded in language. In this context, 'the gaze' refers to the evaluative nature of the selection process. The Panopticon was an architectural form developed as an ideal model for the arrangement of persons in space in a way that would 'forge' them as 'docile bodies'. In other words, bodies that could be more easily transformed and used.

The arrangement of persons in space afforded by the Panopticon facilitated conditions under which these persons could, according to the norms constructed by the organization, be classified, qualified, measured, compared, differentiated and judged. Those persons would thereby experience themselves as being constantly evaluated according to the rules and norms specified by the organization. This ever-present 'gaze' was experienced as and had the effect of a 'normalizing gaze' (White, 1991). In addition to this, there is also the internalization of the 'gaze' in which the individual polices him/herself even when the outside 'gaze' is no longer present.

2) Narrative knowing

Monk and Winslade (1997), make the distinction between narrative knowing as opposed to normative knowing. The distinction between the two is that the narrative way of working, invites the helper to take up an investigative, exploratory, archaeological position rather than an expert stance. The normative way of knowing, however, refers to a focus on universal laws that involves an 'expert' stance regarding the experiences of others.

3) Questioning

In order to facilitate therapeutic conversations, questioning is upheld as a valuable tool within this approach. This is echoed by Epston (1999) who asserts that each time we ask a question we generate a possible version of life. In support of this view, White (1999) mentions that a well formed narrative question is a powerful tool in evoking alternative images of a person's identity. He also adds that the images generated by narrative questions often cause reverberations that enable the person to think about and give voice to an experience of their lives that they might not have thought about before.

4) Audience/Forum of acknowledgement

White (1999), claims that within a narrative theoretical framework, much attention is given to the identification and recruitment of audiences to the preferred developments of peoples' lives through the primary mechanism of a person's 're-tellings' which is the powerful acknowledgment of peoples' expressions of their experiences of life. This links closely with the concept of 'voice' and a person's sense of being heard by others. According to Roberts (1994), people are often in need of help to regain their voice in instances where this might have been silenced and there is a need to slowly rebuild the trust that one's words are being heard by others. This is the acknowledgement of audience that White (1999) refers to and is illustrated in the practice of re-membering in which people consciously re-member the influence of others in their lives and reflect on how these have contributed to who they are and who they are becoming.

5) Re-membering

Re-membering refers to a special type of recollection that is purposive, directed and unifying, different from the passive, continuous fragmentary flickerings of images and feelings that accompany other activities in the normal flow of consciousness. This concept locates people as part of an association or a club which is composed of the significant figures of the person's history and those figures of the person's current life circumstances whose voices are influential in regard to matters of the person's identity (White, 1999). Myeroff in White (1999) states that private and collective lives, properly re-membered, are interpretative and result in full or "thick descriptions" of a person's life.

6) Thick/rich descriptions versus thin conclusions.

This involves finding linkages between individuals' shared, valued beliefs and symbols, and the specific historical events associated with these. White (1997), claims that it is through engaging with a community of persons in the telling and the re-telling of the preferred stories of ones history and identity that lives become 'thickly' described. In contrast he describes 'thin conclusions' as when people come to understand their lives and relationships in terms of how these are interpreted by others in ways that are universal and 'experience distant'. The practice of narrative therapy assists people to break from thin conclusions about their lives, about their identities, and about their relationships. But more than this, however, narrative practice also provides people with the opportunity to engage in the thick or rich description of their lives, of their identities and of their relationships.

7) Identity

Identity is considered as a social and public achievement. It is negotiated within social institutions and within communities of people and is shaped by historical and cultural forces. White (1999), claims that in exploring the mechanisms that give rise to identity, the structure of narrative frequently comes under scrutiny. According to White (1990), people routinely negotiate meaning within the context of narrative frames - they attribute meaning to their experiences of the events in their lives by locating these in sequences that unfold through time and according to certain themes or plots. The narrative

metaphor, therefore, places people as the central protagonists in the stories that they construct, and the meanings they ascribe to their experiences and this encourages a sense of authorship and re-authorship of one's life and relationships in the telling and re-telling of one's story.

8) A narrative approach to pathology

The Narrative approach takes a firm stance against the practice of pathologizing. Instead, the approach tries to open up possibilities for persons and tries to find unique outcomes in the problem saturated stories that they tell of their lives. This is achieved by tracing the development of preferred stories in the lives of people.

Notwithstanding the value of the narrative approach, Polkinghorne (1988), however, highlights some inherent problems in the study of meaning. He contends that the realm of meaning is not static. Meaning making is an activity and cannot be measured by an impersonal instrument and thus it is not easily grasped. In addition to this, he adds that each of us has direct access to only one realm of meaning, and that is our own. This is not available to direct public observation only through self-reflective recall or introspection in our mental realm.

The use of linguistic data is required to study the realm of meaning. The problems of direct access to the realm of meaning can be partially overcome by the study of its linguistic expressions. Polkinghorne (1988), further highlights the need to work primarily with linguistic, rather than quantified data, in the study of consciousness. This does, however, present problems of analysis, since linguistic statements are context-sensitive and lose much of their informational content when treated in isolation. The analysis of linguistic data makes use of hermeneutic reasoning and this form of reasoning uses processes such as analogy and pattern recognition to draw conclusions about the meaning content of linguistic messages. As such, it does not produce certain and necessary conclusions. The realm of meaning is difficult to investigate, as it is an integrated ensemble of connections among images and ideas that appear in various modes of presentation, such as perception, remembrance, and imagination.

A POTENTIAL PARADOX

The study identifies the location of a potential paradox at the interface between the intention and the outcome of the psychology department in adopting a narrative theoretical framework in the first part of the selection process. The overall intention of the psychology department in adopting the narrative approach was to avoid pathologising, provide an opportunity for creativity through the written and spoken language and control damage caused by evaluation in the selection process. However, on the one hand, the act of selection, by its very nature is exclusionary, marginalizing and discriminatory. The Narrative approach, on the other hand, incorporates a philosophy of inclusion and empowerment, showing respect for the individual stories of the candidates in ways that celebrate the uniqueness of the individual. Consequently, the process of selection and the effects of evaluation presents a potential paradox.

THE STUDY

This paper examines the use of narrative principles in the selection and evaluation of trainee psychologists in a particular programme. It identifies and explores the presence of a selection paradox. The research argues that the selection process is an evaluative activity through which a limited number of candidates are selected and others are not. Therefore, this study examines whether it is possible to select trainee psychologist in a way that is not damaging to the candidates on the one hand, and keeps in line with the narrative philosophy on the other.

In 2002 there was a call for applicants for a Masters in Counselling Psychology degree by the psychology department under study. This was done by way of an advertisement in local and national newspapers. Interested candidates who responded to the advert were sent an application form. The application form included a section asking for general information about the candidate and a further section that was included in the place of a self-reflective autobiography. This section contained eight narrative questions that asked for more personal details and stories of the candidates.

The eight narrative questions contained in the application form were as follows:

- 1) What is unique and distinct about what you have to say?
- 2) How is your voice heard by others?
- 3) Are there times when you find that your voice is silenced? How does this make sense to you? Can you reflect on this.
- 4) If your life were a story, what would the title be? If you wanted to change the title what would it be? Being successful in your application, would this contribute to the title change?
- 5) Is there a place that holds special memories for you? What makes this place special for you?
- 6) Think about someone (person or animal) in your life (alive or no longer alive) that is particularly important to you. How would this person describe you? What skills, abilities, values would they talk about? What would they say if they were asked, "what personal qualities/strengths stand out to you about x that would contribute to this course"?
- 7) During your life what learnings or knowledges have been positive for you. What contribution have they made to your life?
- 8) In your life what experiences have you valued?

Some of the questions raised in the study are: did the narrative approach to the selection process in particular, actually have the intended outcomes for the Department? How was the first part of the selection process experienced by the candidates? Was it enriching, or did the nature of the context of selection/non-selection predominate the experience of the candidates? The candidates were given the opportunity to be creative and reflexive of their lives in ways that invited them to speak in their own voices, but did this minimize the impact of the 'gaze'?

In order to explore the above questions, the research design was implemented in two major steps. The research methods employed were the interview, questionnaire and the hermeneutic thematic analysis of data using a reading guide. The first step involved

interviewing the course coordinator of the Masters programme in Counselling Psychology of the psychology department, in order to determine the overall intentions informing the selection process and the specific intention behind each narrative question in the application form. The second step involved an exploration of the experiences of candidates in answering the eight narrative questions in the application form for the Masters programme. The research questionnaire was included with the application documents sent out to the candidates. A total of fifteen responses to the research questionnaire were received from sixty applications that were sent out. The findings of both these steps were juxtaposed against each other to illuminate the extent to which the paradox was evident in the data.

The research questionnaire asked three questions of the candidates to elicit their experiences of having responded to the narrative questions. These questions were as follows:

- 1) What was it like for you, answering these questions?
- 2) Have these questions made you think or feel differently about yourself, your life, your experiences and your relationships? If so, in what ways? (please be specific).
- 3) Do you think there is value in answering these questions? (other than motivating for acceptance on the Masters course).

As a data-analytic method the use of the 'reading guide' enables one to operationalize the paradoxical hermeneutic circle. According to Packer & Addison (1989), this method is a circular one, in that, whilst the whole can only be understood in terms of its parts, by the same token, the parts can only acquire their proper meaning within the context of the whole. They add that the concept of the hermeneutic circle illustrates the point that complex human phenomena (e.g. interview data) can only be understood in a somewhat paradoxical fashion. Using this approach, then, multiple readings were undertaken. Each reading approached the narrative from a different perspective. The first reading of the text was to obtain an overall feel for the data. Once this was done, the narrative was read using a critical interpretive lens in order to locate the presence or absence of the

paradox in what was written. The data was further analyzed using a thematic framework guided by the components of narrative theory as presented in the study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

INTERVIEW WITH THE COURSE CO-ORDINATOR OF THE MASTERS IN COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY COURSE

The purpose of the interview with the course coordinator was to collect information on two levels. The first level was to determine the overall intention informing the selection process and the second level was to determine the specific intention behind each narrative question in the application form. The data that emerged from the interview with the course coordinator provided a rich description of how the questions were informed by narrative theory; and an opportunity to explore the presence (or absence) of the paradox in the words of the coordinator. A detailed description and theoretical discussion is presented.

Level 1: Overall Intention

The course coordinator commented on the overall intention of adopting the narrative approach to the selection process:

"My main intention was to avoid pathologizing discourses which are generally an aspect of being a successful candidate in most psychology courses".

She went on to comment on behalf of the psychology department in general:

"Damage control and the opening up of possibilities for it to be a useful and creative experience. The stance of the psychology department here is that we don't select candidates purely on their academic record. We try to give opportunities where candidates can show their creativity through written and spoken language in addition to academic marks".

She concluded,

"I personally hate evaluations and have witnessed the damage that has happened to people during such instances and so I have tried in the application form and in the selection process to foster a richer experience for the candidate whether they are selected or not - its about damage control".

The presence of the selection paradox is evident in the following analysis of the text and is contained in the statements of the coordinator as outlined below:

"...I wanted to draw very much on their local experience and knowledge in general...in so doing I was trying to give them the opportunity to demonstrate their reflexive ability and written expression of their creativity."

"...If a candidate writes well and creatively, you get an idea- another form of subjective assessment of the candidate.

"...if the candidate writes very concretely it also gives one an idea of the limitations."

"...we don't select candidates purely on their academic record...we try to give opportunities where candidates can show their creativity through written and spoken language in addition to academic marks."

The paradox is further evident as she spoke about candidates *"demonstrating their reflexive ability"* and *"their written expression of their creativity"*. Here the paradox is clear in that, on the one hand, *"she wanted to draw on their local experience and knowledge"* which is in keeping with her motive to gain richer descriptions from the candidates of their lives, but at the same time, she talked in evaluative terms that indicated the importance of evaluating the candidates abilities.

She also commented on inviting the candidates to write *"creatively"*, yet this is also another form of evaluation, as she puts it, *"another form of subjective assessment of the candidate."* The coordinator made note of the candidates' *"limitations"*. The use of these particular words indicated that the voice of the 'gaze' is ever present in these comments, even though, they were grounded in narrative theory.

Level 2: Narrative questions as appearing in the application form

Question 1: What is unique and distinct about what you have to say?

The coordinators' intention behind the question:

"It is quite important to use the word 'say' because it actually locates the construction of the applicant's identity through language. A person's identity is constructed through the use of language".

"The words 'unique' and 'distinct' aim to elicit a sense of the candidates personal richness. These words are linked and are quite strong. This is because usually candidates apply to psychology courses with the usual comments that "I love people, and I want to work with them" etc. The intention with this question is to try to locate the applicants- their personal selves as the focus."

Monk and Winslade (1997), assert that much of a narrative therapist's skill lies in attending closely to the ways we use language and to the positioning we call people into by the words we use and the ways we organize our sentences. This approach requires intentionality on the part of the therapist, skill in language use, and systematic attention to the hidden assumptions in the manner in which people tell their stories (Monk & Winslade 1997). Roberts (1994), asserts that there is growing interest in the development of voice and in how this results in a greater sense of personal agency in the lives of people.

Parry & Doan (1994) claim that narrative is the language of therapy, and a story told by a person in his/her own words, of his / her own experience does not have to plead its legitimacy in any higher court of narrative appeal, this is due to the idea that no narrative has any greater legitimacy than the person's own.

According to Monk and Winslade (1997), narrative therapy seeks to harness such ideas about the power of language and how the self is formed and reformed and they add that this is an ongoing process, one that is never finished - even after death, others will

continue to re-story our lives. Parry and Doan (1994), state that narrative therapy and family therapists in particular, focus on encouraging people in the legitimizing of their own stories. This involves encouraging people to appreciate that when they use their own words to describe their own experiences, no one has any right to take the legitimacy of that story away from them under any circumstances.

Narrative question 2: How is your voice heard by others?

The coordinators' intention behind the question:

"When one speaks about the concept of voice, it is about a person's sense of being heard. And in that way, this is always a relational issue".

"This question aims to locate the candidates in a locational space and explores how they perceive that to be. A 'voice' is associated with issues of power in our social relations".

According to Monk and Winslade, (1997), discourses organize and regulate even interpersonal relationships as they are frameworks that are used to make sense of the world, structuring relations with one another. As seen within this context then, power is not something that one can possess. Power operates at the lowest levels of society and is at work in the many contexts of our everyday interactions, for example, in our homes, playgrounds, and workplaces - wherever there are attempts to make sense of living. Researchers, according to Roberts (1994), have been particularly interested in looking at the way in which familiar and academic environments help or hinder the development of girls' and women's voices, minds and sense of self.

Narrative question 3: Are there times when you find that your voice is silenced?

How does this make sense to you? Can you reflect on this?

The coordinator's intention behind the question:

"The purpose of this question is to try to locate the candidate in the social discourses of power, in an attempt to see whether the candidate has an idea of power relations and/or how the candidate finds him/herself affected by race, class, gender etc. For example, were women less heard and how does the candidate make sense of that."

Monk and Winslade (1997), contend that the way we speak positions us and there are multiple positionings available to us. They go on to say that, within all of these discourses (family, local politics, feminism etc) the power relations into which women are called are likely to be very different: each of these subjectivities reflects a particular kind of positioning in relation to others. They add that, within a narrative stance then, we understand that it is the stories in which the person is positioned that are either enabling or disabling. The narrative counsellor encourages the client to speak in his own voice and this can be viewed as repositioning, or reclaiming the voice of the client.

Often the words, 'speaking and voice' are used as metaphors for the agency of the person. Stories that are spoken in the voice of the person are experienced as more enabling than stories that tell the persons' story for him. Monk and Winslade (1997), see the narrative therapists' objective then, as the need to reposition the client as the speaker or teller of his own story. They consider this to be an account of empowerment, or consciousness raising. This understanding of the processes of coming to speak one's own life owes a great debt to feminist theorizing, radical pedagogy, and community activism.

Narrative question 4: If your life were a story, what would the title be? If you wanted to change the title what would it be? Being successful in your application, would this contribute to the title change?

The intention behind the question:

"This is born out of a narrative understanding of how we are located and how we see ourselves. The storying process is like giving a narrative frame to our lives, which once we have the frame, we can make sense of our past, present and how we could move into the future".

"Changing the title is a notion that looks at the re-authoring process and opens up possibilities for future change".

"The question of whether or not the candidate is to be successful in his application looks at locating this in the concrete future. In other words, in the context of applying for this course and some kind of assessment of the candidates resilience of his/her identity if he/she is not accepted".

White (1999), in exploring the mechanisms which give rise to identity, claims that it is the structure of narrative that is important, for people negotiate meaning within the context of narrative frames- they attribute meaning to their experiences by locating these in certain narrative sequences that unfold through time.

A well formed narrative question, according to White (1999), can be highly evocative of alternative images of a person's identity, suddenly a person finds themselves speaking of some of their experiences of life that line up with and support the image that was evoked by the question.

Narrative question 5: Is there a place that holds special memories for you? What makes this place special for you?

The coordinator's intention behind the question:

"This question tries to get the candidate to provide a thicker description of who they are and this is in relation to a space or place. This description would most probably represent a preferred identity to the candidate".

"This type of question also attempts to avoid pathologizing people. In other words, it attempts to draw on things or aspects which make their lives richly described instead of being pathologically reduced".

According to Freedman and Coombs (1996), the narrative theoretical view takes a firm stand against the practices of pathologizing. Instead narrative theory encourages clients



to celebrate their differences. As people answer questions they come up with stories and a whole range of expressions that provide points of entry to different accounts of their lives.

Narrative conversations, according to White (1999), make it possible for people to stand in different territories of their lives, territories that differently construct their identities and in which different knowledges and skills of living become available for exploration.

Narrative question 6: Think about someone (person or animal) in your life (alive or no longer alive) that is particularly important to you. How would this person describe you? What skills, abilities, values would they talk about? What would they say if they were asked, 'what personal qualities/strengths stand out to you about x that would contribute to this course'?

The coordinator's intention behind the question:

"This question is directly related to connecting candidates with people in their lives who have had a strong influence in shaping their lives in a positive way. This is a 're-membering' task which aims to bring forth the presence of the voices of others in one's life".

"The intention here is to explore aspects of themselves that are not fixed and inside them as the concept 'personality' leads us to understand, and that their identity is made up of and shaped by who in a relational way has made an impact on their lives and identity. The intention therefore, challenges the notion of a 'fixed personality'. Identity is constructed within our relations with others".

According to White (1999), re-membering contributes to the notion of multi-voiced identities and it is built on the metaphor of a club of life. The membership of this club is composed of the significant figures of a person's history, and those figures of the person's contemporary life whose voices are influential in regard to matters of the person's identity.

Narrative question 7: During your life what learnings or knowledges have been positive for you. What contribution have they made to your life?

The coordinator's intention behind the question:

"This is a reflexive question which aims to take the candidate out of a kind of academic understanding around knowledge, and draws on a richer and more personal knowledge of who they are".

White (1988), states that people are encouraged to identify unique outcomes in their life stories and in this way, they derive new and unique re-descriptions about themselves and their relationships.

The coordinator further explained that, *"People might come in with lots of life experiences they have had but if they have not tapped into that life experience then it is of no use. For example, if an applicant is 50 years or 20 years old, the important thing is that the candidate has the ability to be reflective about the experiences he/she has had. This affords us evidence of their reflective ability to integrate it into their identity".*

A narrative approach according to White (1988) invites people to separate themselves and their relationships from the problems they experience and this opens up possibilities for them to describe themselves, each other and their relationships from a new non-problem-saturated perspective.

Narrative question 8: In your life what experiences have you valued?

The coordinator's intention behind the question:

The word 'valued' is important here because you can value an experience even if it is a negative one. For example, experiences of struggle and challenge are not necessarily positive but they can be valued. I suppose what I was looking for here

was the challenges facing the candidate without looking at or asking for any negative or pathological type answers".

"Candidates often come up with the challenges they have faced anyway in response to this question. For example, a candidate spoke about breast cancer and how it made her stronger and therefore she valued the experience... "

White (1999) claims that a primary mechanism of the re-tellings is the powerful acknowledgement of people's expressions of their experiences of life.

CORE THEMES AND THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF THE COORDINATOR'S RESPONSE

Given the above data concerning the narrative intentions and logic that lay behind the questions in the application form and the course coordinator's general intentions for the selection process, the following core themes emerged from this data:

1) the role of language in shaping candidate's identity

According to Burr (1995), as human beings, we organize our experience in ways that makes sense to us and this is done within a framework. Not to do so would result in chaotic, meaningless experience, and our concept of selfhood is the result of this structuring. However, the nature of selfhood and in particular, the kind of structuring we adopt is culturally and linguistically specific. She goes on to say that the conception of selfhood that we acquire comes from the grammar, logic or underlying metaphors present in our language. In addition to this, she says the role of psychology is that of exposing this grammar and showing how it produces the self, as we know it.

The coordinator focused strongly on the language used by the candidates' in describing

their experiences. According to Parry and Doan (1994), there is a phenomenon of 'different worlds, different languages' and this is a product of the demarginalization of people who have been able to find voices of their own and carve out a sense of identity for themselves in the wake of the loss of a consensual belief in one single truth. Parry & Doan (1994) also claim that narrative therapists have the task of encouraging people to appreciate that when they use their own words to describe their own experiences, no one has the right to take the legitimacy of that story away from them.

2) the concept of voice and the candidate's sense of being heard

According to Roberts (1994), in the last few years there has been a lot of interest in the development of the concept of 'voice' and in how, as people speak and feel heard they encounter a sense of personal agency in their lives. She claims it is imperative for therapists to explore with clients' issues around the concept of 'voice'. For example, what is it that the person likes about his/her voice, when is his/her voice the strongest, how does he/she hear the sound of his/her own voice and how does he/she perceive the way his/her voice is heard by others. This is the positive side of the paradox because it is in keeping with the narrative principle of encouraging the person to speak openly and in a way that reflects his/her individuality. But at the same time, this approach is not helpful in an evaluative context because the candidates may experienced fear with regards to judgements being made on whether what they say (be it in their own voice or not), is 'good enough' or acceptable to the selectors in selecting candidates as trainee psychologists.

Roberts (1994) adds that many adults who are in therapy find that their voices were silenced as children due to either trauma or secrecy. Part of the narrative approach is to assist the person in "regaining voice". Candidates' therefore could find that the narrative questions help to bring their own voices to the foreground but this may produce a sensitivity to the 'gaze' on their experiences. According to Roberts (1994), in the last few years there has been much interest in the development of voice and in how, as people speak and feel heard they encounter a sense of personal agency.

Roberts (1994), mentions that it is important for therapists to explore with their clients' issues around the concept of the client's voice. For example, what is it the person likes about his/her voice, when is his/her voice the strongest, how does he/she hear his/her own voice and how does he perceive his voice to be heard by others? This is the positive side of the paradox, because it potentially encourages the candidate to speak openly and in a way that allows for his individuality to come through.

3) location of the candidate's in relation to issues of power in social relations

Within an evaluative context, the issues around power cannot be ignored or evaded. The selectors are also interested in the candidate's understanding of the operation of power in their lives and relationships. According to Roberts (1994), power and knowledge are inextricably linked in that therapy is always assumed to be political in that it operates in an arena of who is seen as having knowledge about what.

4) candidate's storying process using a narrative frame

According to Burr (1995), people impose a structure on their experiences and this is present in their accounts of themselves and this structure is a narrative structure in that people organize their experiences in terms of stories. She goes on to say that it is useful to think of these narratives as the way we live our lives as well as the way we privately or publicly tell of them.

According to White in Parry and Doan (1994), narrative is a scheme, which helps humans to give meaning to their experiences. They go on to say that this functions to give form to the understanding of a purpose to life and to join everyday actions and events into episodic units. In so doing, it provides a framework for understanding the past events of one's life and for planning the future. It is the primary scheme by means of which human existences are rendered meaningful.

5) avoidance of pathologizing practices

As an alternative to traditional ways of understanding problems, the narrative approach makes use of the story metaphor as a resource and connecting focus for therapy. According to Roberts (1994), stories offer a way to name our experiences without imposing a clinical language (which most often emphasizes pathology) upon peoples' lives.

6) avoidance of using 'personality' as a construct

According to Burr (1995), the common-sense notion of personality is a widely shared idea and is described as 'essentialist'. Essentialism is a way of understanding the world that sees things (including human beings) as having their own particular essence or nature, something which can be said to belong to them and which explains how they behave. This 'essentialist' view of personality, then, makes us to think of ourselves as having a particular nature, both as individuals and as a species and this determines what people can and cannot do. A social constructionist notion of personality is one that views (the kind of person you are) as existing not within people but between them. Burr (1995), adds that rather than view personality as something which exists inside us, in the form of traits or characteristics, we could see the person we are as the product of social encounters and relationships - that is, socially constructed. This means that we create rather than discover ourselves and other people. Instead of a focus on the concept of 'personality', a narrative approach prefers to look at the concept of multiple stories that inform a person's identity. These multiple stories encompass the concept of multiple voices and the co-construction of meaning. Roberts (1994), claims that instead of focusing on personality as a unitary, fixed construct, something that exists inside a person, the narrative approach looks at the societal context that allows certain stories to be told and silences others. The questionnaire therefore provides the opportunity for the candidates to come up with stories of their lives and identities that shaped their understanding of who they are. Whether they take this opportunity and whether these self-descriptions are contextually understood by the selectors would indicate the presence of the paradox.

7) to look for thicker/richer descriptions/personal richness of candidates or preferred identities.

According to White (1990), rich descriptions are those that are informed and interpreted by the individual person in that they encompass the persons meaning-making and interpretation of events. These descriptions make it possible for communities of persons to arrive at shared meanings regarding events and actions. Parry & Doan (1994), claim that narrative approaches to therapy focus on helping people to deconstruct debilitating perspectives, replace them with liberating and legitimizing stories and develop a framework of meaning and direction for more intentional, more fulfilling lives for the individual.

8) candidates relations with others: re-membering

Myeroff in White (1999) states that re-membering refers to a special type of recollection that is purposive, directed and unifying in that it locates people as part of an association which is composed of the significant people who have had an influence on their lives and relationships. The candidates were given opportunities through the narrative questions to give voice to those significant people in their lives and to reflect on their relations with them. In particular, to reflect on how these other people in their lives have come to impact on their sense of identity and how they in turn have impacted on the lives of others.

9) candidates ability to be reflexive about self and experiences

According to Roberts (1994), in the training and selecting of trainee psychologists, candidates are asked to think deeply about generational and cultural history, dynamics between males and female, women and children as well as the social contexts of the family and the individual. This evokes reflection and thinking about their own experiences on a number of levels. She goes on to say that some trainees might find themselves trying to create a new professional story for themselves, a story that perhaps bridges some of their personal and professional experiences. Being reflexive and open about those reflections may make the candidates more vulnerable in that it may expose

more of who they are and what they have experience in their lives whether positive or negative. This reflexivity is potentially valuable to the candidates and also to the selectors in that the coordinator has emphasized the candidates' reflexive 'ability' and in this way, the element of evaluation is strongly present. This is a possible moment for the emergence of the paradox.

10) the opening up of possibilities

According to Roberts (1994), the narrative approach embraces the tradition of co-creation of stories, where the therapist and client work together to 're-story' the client's life. In this way, there is a strong focus on the therapeutic possibilities in stories that people already have in their daily life. According to Parry & Doan (1994), many of the people with whom they come into contact with, already have evidence in their lives of alternate stories to which they are not attending (i.e. to which they are unaware). They go on to say that the majority of the times these 'solution saturated' thoughts and behaviours are not being used to inform their stories about themselves and instead they are only performing meaning consistent with the portions of their lives that would lead them to believe that they are somehow deficient.

THE APPLICANTS' EXPERIENCES OF ANSWERING THE NARRATIVE QUESTIONS CONTAINED IN THE RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

The three questions asked by the researcher explored the candidates experiences of responding to the narrative questions contained in the application form. This information provided the opportunity to explore the paradox from the perspective of the candidates. Their responses to the research questions were analyzed and certain themes emerged from the data. These are presented as follows:

1) discovery/learning

Almost all the candidates commented that the process of answering the questions was experienced as a learning or self-discovery. One of the candidates said that this process

of discovery was not about finding something new, but rather, about transforming or re-writing something old.

2) relatedness/re-membering others

At some point in the accounts of the candidates, several made mention of significant persons who influenced them a great deal in their lives. In addition to this, the candidates also became aware of their contributions to the lives of others.

3) self-reflection/exploration

Almost all the applicants said that the exercise gave them the opportunity to take time to reflect on their lives in general. In addition to this, the candidates showed a sense of appreciation for the opportunity to reflect and remarked on it as being valuable to them.

4) difficulty/ease of answering

This theme was evident in most of the candidates' responses. Although, the questions were thought-provoking and led to self-discovery, they were also experienced as difficult questions to answer.

5) time

In addition to the difficulty of answering the questions, the candidates also found that in order to answer the questions, a great amount of time was needed.

6) healing

The candidates recognized the enormous therapeutic value of reflecting and writing about their lives. One of the candidates found the questions as a tool in healing after the death of a loved one.

7) evaluation

Despite the healing aspect of the questions, the candidates were aware throughout the process of the evaluative nature of the context of selection. In answering the questions they became aware of the effects of evaluation on their writing. The presence of the 'gaze' was strong and in addition to this, the candidates also experienced an 'inner gaze', which caused them to doubt their own responses, wondering if these would be good enough for selection.

8) editing

This theme is linked closely to the theme of evaluation. Within the writing process, there is an unconscious commentary happening (Haaroff, 1998). Many candidates commented on being aware of a type of 'editing' process that was going on whilst answering the questions. The 'gaze', in this context, is experienced in its traditional sense as the critical view of those outside of us and in positions of power. It also applies to the inner critical gaze as it is tuned in on itself in the form of self-evaluation.

It was found that even though, the candidates enjoyed answering the questions, they did however, experience it as a difficult task because the element of evaluation was strongly evident. One candidate stated: "I enjoyed answering the questions but it was not easy to answer them, though". The fact that the questions invited them to speak in their own voices and allowed space for creativity in their answers, however, did not minimize the effects of selection as a judgmental activity. Another candidate responded: "when I saw them and read them I became so nervous, I was not sure of how to answer them, where to start and what exactly to say about myself".

The voice of the 'gaze' and the element of evaluation seemed to overshadow their experience of the good intentions of the process. Another candidate claimed that, "answering these questions made me anxious as they have a contributing effect to me being selected to the masters program and what was mostly of concern for me is how they would perceive my importance I attach to religion and if this would negatively influence my selection". A common thread appears throughout the candidates' comments regarding the questions. Whilst, they found the process conducive to self-

reflection and discovery, their awareness of the nature of the context in which their responses would be read, could not be minimized. "It is not easy answering these questions, you know they will have a negative or positive impact on your future...you have a nagging fear that you are not good enough..."

The narrative intentions behind the questions and the candidate's experiences of the questions were explored to illuminate the presence of the paradox. The conclusions to the paper flow from these findings.

CONCLUSIONS

The study explored the selection process for trainee psychologists within a narrative theoretical framework. It raised the question of whether the selection process of trainee psychologists can be an enriching experience. Does a narrative philosophy on the part of the psychology department make this process any less pathologizing than traditional approaches, given that the context is one in which evaluation of candidates is the purpose?

This was explored in the form of two major steps. The first component entailed a detailed interview with the course coordinator in which the narrative intentions that shaped the selection questions were elicited. The second component of the study explored what it was like for the candidates to answer the narrative questions in the application form. The candidates' responses were analyzed thematically and eight general themes emerged from the data. This was done in order to explore to what extent, if any, the paradox was evident in both the intentions of the psychology department regarding the selection process for the Masters programme and in the candidate's experiences of answering the questions in the application form for the selection process.

It was found that even though, the candidates enjoyed answering the questions, they did however, experience it as a difficult task because the element of evaluation was not ameliorated. The fact that the questions invited them to speak in their own voices and allowed space for creativity in their answers did not minimize the effects of selection.

The voice of the 'gaze' and the element of evaluation seemed to overshadow candidate's positive experience of the selection process. This is similar to what White (1988) cites as the ever-present 'gaze' experienced by persons in Bentham's Panopticon which, in effect, produced a 'normalizing' gaze in that the candidates experienced themselves as being evaluated according to the unspoken rules of the organization. The result is 'thin conclusions' about one's life (White, 1991). A 'thin conclusion' according to White (1991), is one that is regulated by control mechanisms and can only be understood through interpretations that are informed by the 'expert' knowledge of the professional disciplines.

There is a thread that runs through the accounts of the candidates, whilst, they found the process conducive to self-reflection and discovery, their awareness of the nature of the context in which their responses would be read, could not be minimized. The candidates were continually aware of the fact that their responses were being evaluated and this would impact on their selection for the Masters programme. This is supported by White (1991) in his critique of the culture of professional disciplines. He argues about a shift in what counts as legitimate knowledge as people enter the field of psychology. He states that much is forsaken as peoples' lives become professionally membered in the monoculture of psychotherapy. Their local knowledge is often forsaken and the outcome of this is a dis-memberment that contributes to a loss of history, and a loss of a particular sense of the self.

The co-ordinator's intentions are supported by the components of narrative theory as put forward in the earlier part of the paper. The overall intention of the Psychology Department regarding the selection process and the narrative questions was a focus on gaining 'rich descriptions' of the candidates lives in which the significant others are remembered and in which candidates could perform meaning around their identities. This was done with the aim of avoiding pathologizing practices and a respect for the local knowledge of the candidates. Although it was not a stated intention of the course coordinator, the selection process became another forum of acknowledgement for the candidates in which they were able to give voice to aspects of their lives that produced

richer descriptions of their identity and relationships. The problems inherent in this approach have been highlighted by the analysis of the applicants' responses and by Polkinghorne's (1988), critique of some of the inherent problems in the study of meaning that is relevant to this particular study. Because the realm of meaning is regarded as an activity and not a thing, it is not static in nature and therefore is not easily grasped. Reality is co-constructed and changes in the daily interactions and experiences we have with others. As a result, the candidates understanding of self and their descriptions of their lives given at the time of answering the questions are not fixed and as such are subject to change in the future.

Polkinghorne (1988), also claims that there are inherent problems in the study of linguistic data. Due to the fact that linguistic statements are contextually sensitive, they lose much of their information content when treated in isolation. It appears also, that the selectors assumed that all the candidates who had applied spoke English as their first language. Given the diversity of the South African population, this assumption is problematic for candidates for whom English is not their first language and thus had to answer complex questions and express themselves creatively to provide 'rich descriptions'. These inherent problems support the selection paradox in that they exacerbate the negative influence of the 'gaze' on the candidates and minimized the positive experience of the narrative approach adopted by the psychology department in the selection process.

It is concluded that the process of selection and evaluation of trainee psychologists remains a complex and vexed issue. More research is required in this area, particularly within the South African context where the need for psychological services is on the increase. This study also highlights the need for training institutions to adopt a reflexive stance regarding their theoretical philosophies and the practices that accompany them. It is only through continually reflecting on the above that institutions are able to remain flexible to the needs of their particular contexts and to retain an awareness of their effects on those who approach them for training.

RESEARCHER'S REFLECTIONS

I include my experiences as a researcher as part of the conclusions. According to Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, Tindall (1994), a social constructionist theoretical stance encourages researchers to take time to reflect on their work. They assert that there is a need in research to include a section that stands back from your study, and looks at it, analyzing how appropriate the methods were in retrospect, what it felt like to be a participant, how it might have been done differently and what further research could be done.

I, as a researcher have my own ideas, biases, interests, values and experiences that may have influenced the process of the study. Having been involved in a similar selection process as the one under study, I remembered my own experiences and interpretation of how this was for me. This provided the impetus for me to pursue this study. Also, it is valuable to recognize that the position from which I now write is different to the time when I first went through the selection process. (I am now at a different interpretive horizon). The meaning I ascribe to this experience has changed in the passing of time.

I acknowledge the limitations of the study. In keeping with a narrative philosophy, the use of in-depth interviews or conversations with the candidates would have elicited richer information. This was not a preferred option, however, due to the fact that the candidates were already immersed in a selection process and the thought of more interviews might have been daunting for them. Perhaps, the paucity of responses to the research questionnaire itself bears testimony to this. It appears from their comments, that the candidates feared their responses might impact on their being selected for the course. This notwithstanding, the extremely confidential nature of the study- anonymity was guaranteed through the use of pseudonyms, and the possible publication of the results does not have the potential to cause harm to candidates who might identify themselves from such a report.

Having said this, I am confident that the study was conducted in a respectful way. Studies should, according to Banister, et al., (1994), among other things, be concerned

with establishing mutual respect and confidence, participants should be respected as individuals, and as having fundamental rights, dignity and worth. I am grateful for the responses that were received.

White (1999) describes the process of therapy within a narrative framework as being a two-way process. In order for therapy to be a two-way process, it is necessary for the therapist to take into account how the therapeutic encounter has impacted on his own life both personally and professionally. In a similar fashion, this can be regarded as a two-way account of the research process. In the process of gathering these accounts, reading and analyzing them, I have become aware that I have been in a process of 're-storying' myself. I too have been recalling the events of my own journey, re-framing my own memories, remembering who I consider myself to be and revisioning who it is that I am becoming. This research therefore impacted on me at both a personal and professional level.

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