

**EXPLORING THE USE AND RELEVANCE OF NARRATIVE APPROACHES TO  
PSYCHO-SOCIAL INTERVENTIONS IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT: A  
MIXED METHODS CONTENT ANALYSIS**

Submitted by

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## DECLARATION

I, Christelle Smit (201400321), hereby confirm that the research project reported on below is my own work and that I completed all steps relative to it, as reported.

Signed at ..... on this ..... day of .....2016.

Signature .....

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This project is lovingly dedicated to my husband and our unborn child.

Compiling this research report has been one of my most testing achievements. There have been periods of frustration, drought, tears, and fears of inadequacy but somewhere, somehow, in the midst of that, there were wonderful sparking moments of felt accomplishment, the light bulb going off, sheer excitement and always a sense of hope.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to explore the use and relevance of Narrative approaches to psycho-social interventions in the South African context. The profession of psychology in South Africa has been in a state of discontentment since the country's turn to democracy in 1994 which has been voiced from both those within the profession and those it aims to assist. The loudest call is for a psychology that is relevant to the South African context – culturally, socially, and politically.

Narrative approaches to psychotherapy and psycho-social intervention are grounded in post-modern and social-constructionist thought and offer an alternative to mainstream psychological theory. Narrative practice aims to promote social justice and views therapy as a political act. It is also an approach that values local knowledges and sees all therapeutic engagements as cross-cultural encounters which are approached with curiosity and a not-knowing stance, rather than an interpretive, analytical lens.

This study has investigated what the existing literature has produced regarding the use and relevance of Narrative approaches in South Africa context. The research process was implemented using a mixed methods research methodology whereby a sample of 58 journal articles (n=58) were analysed using both quantitative and qualitative content analysis. The common themes that emerged from the articles were 'viewing people in context', 'listening to the telling of stories', 'theoretical constructs of a narrative approach', and 'social phenomena'.

**Keywords:** Narrative approaches, South Africa, cultural relevance, socio-political relevance, post-modern therapy

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

This project is concerned with South African journal articles relating to the use of Narrative approaches to psycho-social interventions in South Africa. The use and relevance of Narrative approaches to psycho-social interventions in South Africa will be analysed as a means to uncover whether this approach offers a valid and effective alternative to mainstream approaches and current practices of psycho-social intervention.

As a post-graduate Master's student of Psychology, my interest in this topic arose as I was introduced to the Narrative approach's philosophical and theoretical underpinnings which appeared to offer a refreshing view of people seeking psychological assistance and the problems they are experiencing. My interest was further heightened as I became aware of the discontentment surrounding the profession of Psychology in South Africa, particularly relating to its over-reliance on Western modes of thinking with regards to individualism and pathology, its inaccessibility to the majority of South Africans, and its alleged irrelevance to the South African context (Ruane, 2010).

### **1.2 Locating the Research**

Since South Africa entered into democracy in 1994, the profession of psychology has been attempting to correct itself in terms of its accessibility, representativeness and relevance. Indeed, there have been calls for an indigenous, South African

psychology to address these concerns (Magwaza, 2013). Although this may seem the obvious solution to the current state of psychology, some have criticised that an African psychology would promote a stagnant view of South African culture which cannot be separated from the impact of globalisation and would serve to ignore the fact that various cultures connect and overlap and thus cannot be isolated from one another (Ratele, 2014; Young, Bantjes & Kagee 2016).

If not a culturally specific, South African psychology, then where should the profession be looking to for an approach that meets the unique psycho-social needs of our diverse and dynamic country? Based on the tenets of Narrative approaches, particularly with regards to cultural sensitivity, political agency and social justice, as well as the successful use of Narrative approaches in contexts similar to South Africa, the main thesis of this project is that Narrative approaches may offer a useful and relevant alternative to mainstream approaches of psycho-social intervention. Although this study is situated in the field of psychology, the contextual realities of South Africa are pertinent to understanding the necessity of identifying a relevant psycho-social approach. Thus before defining the research questions, it is necessary to briefly describe the cultural and socio-political context of South Africa.

### 1.3 The South African Context

Twenty two years into democracy and South Africa is still faced with the ripple effects of its patriarchal and colonial past which has embedded socially constructed systems of white supremacy, classist idealisation and gender inequality power relations deep within the country's identity. According to Business Insider, in 2011 South Africa was listed as the second most unequal society in the world with a GINI

index of 65.0 (GINI index measures the income distribution of a society) , runner up only to Namibia. This was confirmed to still be the case in August 2014 by then Public Protector, Thuli Madonsela, when she delivered a speech at the University of Stellenbosch (City Press, 2014).

#### 1.4 The Cultural Context

South Africa consists of many races, cultures, religious affiliations and language groups; it is known as the “Rainbow Nation” with good reason. The population of South Africa is made up of the Nguni (Zulu, Xhosa, Ndebele and Swazi people), the Sotho-Tswana, the Tsonga, the Venda, the Afrikaner, the English, the Coloured, and the Indian people; as well as those who have immigrated from other parts of the globe (Pocket Guide to South Africa, 2011/12). This diversity of culture results in the country formally acknowledging 11 official languages and multiple religious groups. The Constitution of South Africa recognises the right of its people to engage in the cultural practices, language use and religious affiliation of their choice, provided these do not infringe on the rights of others.

This respect for and acknowledgement of cultural diversity connects with the concept of ‘Ubuntu’. Ubuntu is understood nationwide to involve respect and value for community above self, it fosters a belief of equal access to resources, respect, service, and trustworthiness (Chaplin, 2006, p1). A Xhosa proverb encapsulates this African philosophy in the words *Umntu ngumntu ngabanye abantu*, meaning “People are people through other people” and “I am human because I belong to the human community and I view and treat others accordingly.” The philosophy of Ubuntu is defined in the South African White Paper on Welfare as:

the principle of caring for each other's well-being and as a spirit of mutual support. Each individual's humanity is ideally expressed through his or her relationship with others and theirs in turn through a recognition of the individual's humanity. Ubuntu means that people are people through other people. It also acknowledges both the right and the responsibilities of every citizen in promoting individual and societal well-being. (Chaplin, 2006, p2)

Despite the values encapsulated by the philosophy of Ubuntu as well as South Africa's constitutional commitment to diversity, it is a country wounded by its history. One of these wounds is mass poverty and unemployment. According to Stats SA (2014), 23.4% of the population is unemployed; this is broken down as follows: 40% Black; 28% Coloured; 18% Indian; 8% White. This large unemployment rate has resulted in desperation for access to resources as well as competitiveness in the labour market and is often cited as underlying the recent spate of xenophobic attacks against foreign nationals (South African History Online [SOHO], 2015).

### 1.5 The Socio-political Context

The current socio-political climate in South Africa is palpable with the recent municipal elections making history by ushering in opposition coalitions to dethrone the long standing governing party in three of the country's major metros. This has come at a time when the nation is growing tired of corruption scandals and poor service delivery (Corruption Watch, 2015).

Leading up to the elections, we have seen an uprising in protest action some of which have called for government to take action on neglected issues while others forced the nation to face critical "swept under the rug" topics. Student protests

introduced various #MustFall campaigns, starting with #RhodesMustFall at the University of Cape Town which called for the memorial statue of Cecil John Rhodes to be removed from the campus for its symbolic representation of colonialism. This movement quickly spread through the rest of the country with various campaigns springing up, such as #FeesMustFall against increasing tertiary education costs and #AfrikaansMustFall in reaction to language being used as a means of covertly allowing racial segregation to continue amongst students (University of Cape [UCT], n.d.).

## 1.6 Power Relations and Discourses

### 1.6.1 Race

Despite the fact that South Africa is in its 21<sup>st</sup> year of democracy as a self proclaimed “rainbow nation”, race remains at the heart of all public discourse within the country (Pityana, 2004). As a result of our country’s history, which is marred with social signifiers such as colonisation by Europe, 50 years of Apartheid, violent struggle and resistance, this pervasive racism operates in the depths of South African consciousness.

Included in the discourse of race is the discourse of ‘whiteness’ which is becoming a growing study in South Africa and the USA (Makhanya, 2010). Pityana (2004) proposes that racism and whiteness have become synonymous terms in South Africa. Steyn and Foster (cited in Makhanya, 2010, p24) *refer to ‘New South African Speak’* which places emphasis on notions of democracy, social development, non-racialism, reconciliation, equality and freedom. They accuse these idealised values of providing a convenient front for white South Africans to hide their racism behind. The main premise of this argument is that the discourse of non-racialism results in

'colour blindness' and denial of racialisation in white South Africans. When race is acknowledged, the discourse of democracy is employed and used as a kind of scapegoat; linked to this is the discourse of denial where White South Africans deny their current privileged status. Ballard (2003) refers to race as "the elephant in the living room" and points out that replacement categories such as class, culture and standards are being used to disguise racism. van Niekerk (cited in Ballard, 2003, p1) states that "The 'new' South Africa cannot be built on convenient denials of racism." Part and parcel to this denial of racialisation is that the labels of 'race', 'racism' and 'racist' have become judgemental terms that are offensive to many South Africans (Ballard, 2003). "But the one thing about racism is that it will not vanish simply because some people insist that in a rainbow nation it does not exist" (Schutte, 2013, para. 5).

#### 1.6.2 Class

If racism still exists yet is denied, where does it go? According to Ballard (2003, p7) the terms 'race' and 'class' are not mutually exclusive in the South African context:

"What we are observing is not the decreasing importance of race and the increasing importance of class, but a hope that class will function as an urban filter in the same way that race once did."

This implies that denied racism is redistributed as classism. Ballard (2003, p8) refers to "*New South African Speak*" in which a class 'filter' is employed that involves acceptance of black people if they fit within the white South African mould – "well educated, speaks good English without an (African) accent, holds down a professional job, and has a regular nuclear family" (Ballard, 2003, p8). There is thus a fundamental connection between race and class in South Africa.

The connection between race and class becomes blatant when critically considering the class structure of South Africa. There are three distinctive class groups in South Africa: 1) the upper-class which is increasingly multi-racial and described as elitist; 2) the middle class, consisting of semi-professional and industrial workers (25%); and 3) the majority working class (46%) and unemployed (24.3%). Stats SA (2014) released new data in September 2014 revealing the following breakdown of the aforementioned unemployment rate: 40% Black; 28% Coloured; 18% Indian; 8% White. The implication is that “class”, when used according to the parameters described previously, refers very specifically to the black majority in South Africa.

### 1.6.3 Gender

Through South Africa’s history of tribalism, colonialism and white capitalism the thread of patriarchal male dominance is evident and remains economically and socially embedded to the present day.

A report on Gender Equality in South Africa issued by StatsSA in 2011 reveals that as a woman in South Africa you are less likely than a man to be able to read in at least one language, more likely to be unemployed and will likely spend more time than a South African man doing unpaid activities such as housework and caring for others. Furthermore, as an employed South African woman, you are more likely to hold clerical and elementary types of employment and fall into a lower income category than your male counterpart. Indeed, it is indicated that at the time of the report there were more women than men in managerial, technical and professional categories of employment; however, in this category women are more likely than men to hold a tertiary qualification which indicates a possible double standard in

qualification requirements for these positions. Moreover, a significantly higher portion of men are employers than are women in South Africa (StatsSA, 2011).

“Research shows that domestic violence against women remains widespread and under reported, and that victims of violence are not effectively supported by public services.” There are many forms of violence against women which all have disenfranchising and enduring effects, such as physical, sexual, psychological and emotional (South African Government, n.d.). According to statistics released by the South African Police Services in 2015, approximately 147 cases of rape are reported in South Africa every day (Rape Crisis, n.d.). However, studies indicate that this is likely a conservative number. When unreported incidents of rape are taken into consideration, it is alleged that a more realistic estimate may be as high as 1320 rapes each day. Of the 147 cases that are reported to law enforcement, less than 30 are prosecuted, with only 4% – 8% resulting in conviction (Smythe, 2016). The overwhelming majority of these violent assaults are perpetrated against women.

### 1.7 Research Questions

The broad research questions posed in this study with regards to journal articles about Narrative approaches to psycho-social interventions were:

1. How are Narrative approaches used in psycho-social interventions in South Africa? and
2. Are they represented in a way that translates to relevance for the South African context?

Each journal article was thus analysed according to the following sub-questions:



- What are the most frequent themes found in literature regarding Narrative approaches in South Africa?
- What areas of praxis are Narrative approaches to psycho-social interventions most frequently used in?
- How do the identified themes relate to the South African context and how does this translate to cultural and/or socio-political relevance?
- How are the themes identified in the articles related to one another?
- How do I as the reader/researcher respond to the way Narrative approaches are represented in the texts?

## 1.8 Overview

This introductory chapter has served to highlight the cultural and socio-political context of South Africa and included a discussion on some of the most prevalent discourses and power relations operating in the country. This contextual account suggests that South Africa is a discontented nation, and to quote Oscar Wilde “discontentment is the first step in the progress of a man or a nation.” As South Africa comes to terms with its past, awakening from the lull of denialism and taking its steps towards progress, those within the profession of psychology in South Africa should consider what their role in this scenario is.

Mainstream psychology globally, and not least in South Africa, has long been under criticism for its over reliance on Westernised theory in contexts which do not fully adhere to the same ideologies (Johnston, 2015). Today, questions over the applicability of psychological theory, practice and research has culminated in what is commonly termed ‘the relevance debate’ in local psychological literature with claims

that the profession lacks cultural, social and political relevance (Long, 2013; Macloed & Howell, 2013). And furthermore includes criticisms against the profession for largely remaining silent on some of the most pressing socio-political issues (Pillay, 2016).

In order to respond to the crisis of relevance in South African psychology, this study aims to examine the use and relevance of a Narrative approach to psycho-social interventions within the South African context. Narrative practices present a post-modern approach to psychotherapy, and are situated in contrast to more traditional, modern approaches. Particularly, a Narrative approach places emphasis on the interwoven relationship between the 'self' and 'social structures' (Crossley, 2000). Furthermore, and crucially, Narrative approaches charge therapists practicing with the responsibility of confronting issues of privilege and dominance and promoting justice (Denborough, 2013).

This project will begin with a review of the current literature regarding the state of psychology in South Africa, as well as a brief discussion on Narrative approaches. The focus of Chapter 3 will be on the methodology and theoretical framework followed in order to answer the research questions which involves a mixed methods sequential explanatory content analysis done from a post-modern, social constructionist perspective. Following from this, Chapter 4 will present the findings and analysis in accordance with the research questions previously defined. In the concluding chapter, the main arguments of the study are summarised and recommendations are made.

## 1.9 Conclusion

In this introductory chapter attention was given to locating this study within the current debate regarding the cultural and socio-political relevance of psychology in South Africa which includes calls for an indigenous psychology. A Narrative approach to psycho-social interventions was suggested as a possible alternative to mainstream psychology.

In order to comprehend the necessity of a culturally and socio-politically relevant psychology in South Africa, a brief overview of the current national context was given which included discussions on the heavily engrained discourses of race, class and gender. The research questions guiding this study were then outlined and an overview of the research was provided.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The focus of this literature review will be on the current literature surrounding the topic of the profession of psychology within the current socio-political context of post-Apartheid, democratic South Africa. This review shows that there is much debate regarding whether the profession of psychology as a whole is adequately addressing the needs of South Africa as a multicultural nation. I am including in this review background information on psychology's relationship with South Africa during the apartheid era in order to establish a clear reconciliation of the present day concerns. Sher and Long (2012) purport that it is important to historicise the relevance of psychology debate in order to encompass a richer appreciation of why this debate continues to be so prominent within psychological literature and discussion.

#### **2.2 The problem saturated (hi)story of psychology in South Africa**

The literary account of psychology's historical relationship with South Africa is marred with disillusionment. The myriad of accusations, range from apathy and silence to collusion and servitude with regards to apartheid ideals and white supremacist ideology in South Africa (Barnes & Cooper, 2016; Gylseth, 2008; Louw & van Hoorn, 1997). Although it is largely accepted that the year 1948 marked the beginning of the apartheid regime, race segregation in South Africa was introduced a number of years prior to this, during South Africa's colonial era (Louw & van Hoorn, 1997).

### 2.2.1 Psychological testing

During the 1920's and 1930's, psychological testing was employed as a means to justify possible policy conclusions such as Africans being uneducable and not being of sufficient mature mental age to be entrusted with "the vote and other privileges of full citizenship" (Minde, 1937, p249 in Louw and van Hoorn, 1997). Indeed, Louw & van Hoorn (1997) do note that there existed the argument for education being a means to diminish these 'mental' differences between the races, however history shows that these voices were by and large disregarded.

Ironically, it was too during the 1930's that the well-known Carnegie Commission conducted its investigation into the "poor white problem" in South Africa (Louw & van Hoorn, 1997; Gylseth, 2008). Psychologists and psychometric testing played a vital role in this investigation which found that the poor scholastic performance of less than affluent white children could be ascribed to factors such as malnutrition and substandard education. Consequently, government-funded feeding schemes in white schools were introduced, along with improvement of educational facilities (Louw & van Hoorn, 1997). Once again, those voices canvassing for similar state funded intervention in black schools were ignored.

### 2.2.2 Professional psychology bodies

The contribution of psychology to the Carnegie Commission helped to legitimise psychology as a socially valuable profession which could avail skills and techniques to further the interests of society (Gylseth, 2008; Louw & van Hoorn, 1997); as a result the first professional body for psychology, the South African Psychological Association (SAPA), was established in 1948 (Long & Foster, 2013; Gylseth, 2008; Louw & van Hoorn, 1997). Although this association did not explicitly prohibit black

membership, an application for membership from a black psychologist in 1957 resulted in a five year debate (during which membership to black psychologists was denied) which culminated in a vote (31 for and 24 against) being passed that allowed black psychologist membership in 1962 (Stones, 2001). Stones (2001) is quick to note, however, that the 'for' vote was largely due to concerns over international censorship, rather than an ethical obligation towards racial equality. As a result of this motion, the vice-president of SAPA, along with a large portion of SAPA members, resigned from the association in order to form the 'whites-only' Psychological Institute of the Republic of South Africa (PIRSA) (Long & Foster, 2013; Gylseth, 2008; Stones, 2001). By 1978 the apartheid government had started to come under intense international pressure and with that PIRSA began to join SAPA for joint congresses, eventually officially amalgamating to form the Psychological Association of South Africa (PASA).

In 1983, the Organisation of Appropriate Social Services in South Africa (OASSA) was established in reaction to the apparent complicity of psychologists with the apartheid government (Long & Foster, 2013). OASSA committed itself to "working only with the victims of apartheid brutality" and believed that the way to restore the psychological health of the nation was to engage in politics (Long & Foster, 2013, p8). However, OASSA was essentially a white-run organisation and discontented black psychologists seeking a more radical platform founded the Psychology and Apartheid Committee in the late 1980's.

According to Abrahams (1992), it was only in the mid 1980's that the profession of psychology began engaging in debates about race in South Africa. This is reiterated by Long and Foster (2013, p10):

At a time when Steve Biko had just been killed, young white men were being forced into military services, the African National Congress (ANC) was bombing SASOL installations, white professionals were starting to leave the country in droves, South Africa was under an arms embargo and the economy was in recession ... not a single speaker [at SAPA/PIRSA and PASA congresses] was able to mention the word 'apartheid' except for Biesheuvel in 1986.

Sher and Long (2012), after conducting a review of the literature, report that during the 1980's psychology was criticised as being inaccessible and inapplicable to the majority of South Africans. This transformed into discussions over the profession's demographic representativeness (which continues at present) after the country's turn to democracy in 1994.

### 2.2.3 Black psychologists in South Africa

According to Abrahams (1992), in 1987 there were 2060 registered psychologists in South Africa, of which less than 10% were categorised as 'black'. Holdstock (cited in Sher & Long, 2012) reported in 1979 that there was just one black psychologist registered in the clinical psychologist category. Indeed, black universities did offer psychology courses (Manganyi, 2013; Abrahams, 1992); however, opportunities for black psychology students to complete the internship training required for registration appear to have been lacking. "It's as if Africans were not expected to train as clinical psychologists" (Manganyi, 2013, p280).

N. Chabani Manganyi provides a personal account of his experience of becoming a clinical psychologist in apartheid South Africa, in which he explains that in 1965 he was the first black student to request placement for clinical internship training at the University of Witwatersrand (Manganyi, 2013). Manganyi was not permitted to

complete his training at the psychiatric hospitals which catered for white patients, and, as such, arrangements were made for him to conduct his internship at the then Baragwanath Hospital in Soweto. Because Manganyi was the first intern clinical psychologist at the hospital, he found that there was no established program or regular supervision of his work (Manganyi, 2013).

Furthermore, Seedat (1998), in his content analysis of the South African Journal of Psychology and Psychology in Society, shows that the voices of the glaringly disproportionate black psychologists remained largely unheard. Between 1948 and 1988 just 3.8% of articles had black writers represented at the level of first authorship.

#### 2.2.4 Psychology moves into democratic South Africa with a monkey on its back

Eventually in 1994, the same year that the democratic election ushered in the promise of a 'New South Africa', PASA, OASSA and the Psychology and Apartheid Committee dissolved to form the Psychological Society of South Africa (PsySSA), still in operation today (Long & Foster, 2013). However, the legacy of psychology's complicity and silence during the apartheid regime has continued to cause dis-ease, debate and deliberation within in the profession over the last 20+ years.

### 2.3 Psychology in search of a preferred identity

A review of the current literature which focuses on the state of psychology in South Africa now 20+ years after the turn of democracy, reveals some common themes which will now be briefly discussed. These themes, which emerged from the literature, point to a searching, grappling, striving attempt of psychology to break the mould of its apartheid-supporting legacy as it searches for a new identity in South



Africa. In terms of the current study, these themes provide important insight on the current shortcomings of South African psychology which can then be compared to the tenets of Narrative approaches and how they are possibly being used by some psychologists and counsellors to address similar concerns.

### 2.3.1 Demographic representativeness in the profession

Cooper (2014) states that in March 2014 12,316 professionals were licensed with the HPCSA under the various categories of the Professional Board for Psychology; at that time, 25% of these were black professionals. Although these figures show an upward growth of black representation in the profession, this remains a significantly skewed demographic profile when compared to our national demographics (Cooper, 2014; Pillay, 2016). Furthermore, it is reported that the field of psychology is dominated by the Afrikaans and English languages (Louw & Machemedze, 2015).

#### 2.3.1.1 Selection of masters' students

Indeed, it stands to reason that the transformation required in terms of the demographic representativeness of psychology should begin at the stage of selection and training of post-graduate psychology students. It is thus promising to note that the statistics show a dramatic increase in the number black masters' students (Cooper, 2014), reported to be at 32% in the 2011 South African census (Louw & Machemedze, 2015). However, equity and the importance of training more psychologists of colour remain critical (Edwards, 2014; Pillay, 2016).

#### 2.3.1.2 Psychology is inaccessible and underused

The majority of the South African population do not access psychological services, this particularly relates to the black population (Ruane, 2010). A small scale study

conducted with black African adults revealed some of the fundamental reasons for this as being: cultural beliefs as barriers (e.g. family belief systems and patriarchal worldview), a lack of understanding regarding the symptoms of mental illness, the stigma of mental illness, high costs of psychological intervention, the profession being a white-dominated field with few black therapists, a distrust of therapists (regardless of race) who are not rooted and active within the underserved community settings, psychologists' lack of knowledge about the African worldview and healing systems (Ruane, 2010).

### 2.3.2 (Ir)relevance of psychology

The relevance of psychological theory, practice and research for the majority of South African citizens is currently in contention (Long, 2013).

#### 2.3.2.1 Cultural relevance

Criticisms such as those highlighted in the study undertaken by Ruane (2010) discussed above point to the need for higher levels of cultural competency and sensitivity amongst South African psychologists if they wish to make a valuable impact on the country's mental health and wellbeing. However, Ruane (2010) is careful to point out that what is required is grounded at the deeper epistemological level rather than at the superficial level of knowledge when it comes to various cultures in South Africa. "[E]ffective multicultural counselling requires appropriate attention to the cultural, spiritual, worldview, values, language, political, economic, and other contexts..." (Edwards, 2014).

### 2.3.2.2 Socio-Political relevance

‘Social relevance’ which is listed as one of the core values of PsySSA arouses much valuable dialogue within the profession of psychology (Long, 2013). The profession stands accused of directing too much focus on curative and treatment interventions “at the expense of maximising its competencies in health and social change” (Pillay, 2016). Moreover, published research remains dominated by traditional subjects such as assessment, stress and pathology while more relevant social issues are largely being neglected (Macleod & Howell, 2013). Macleod and Howell (2013) assert that psychology is unavoidably a socio-political act that cannot be untangled from the embedded power relations of a society. Thus, the knowledge that psychologists produce should be engaging of the socio-political context as well as being aimed at deconstructing the inherent social inequalities and power relations that exist.

Kiguwa (2014, p36) states that relevance involves critically examining the “magical boundaries” that psychology has conjured up (past and present) in order to separate the profession from the socio-political realities of the country. Amidst the present day climate of #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall, along with similar narratives involving calls for justice and the disruption of colonisation and racialised power dynamics, psychology has largely remained silent (Pillay, 2016; Barnwell, 2016). “[P]sychology as a discipline becomes complicit by saying nothing, by resisting urgent conversations for change, or by refusing to understand the logic and legitimacy of decolonisation” (Pillay, 2016, p157). Moreover, Barnwell (2016), purports that it is psychology’s over investment in the drive for market relevance that has resulted in its proportional neglect of social relevance.

### 2.3.2.3 Market relevance

Indeed, despite the preponderance of important debates regarding the cultural, social and political relevance of psychology - which directly pertain to the mental well-being of the nation as a whole, Long (2013, p441) highlights that key note and presidential addresses of PsySSA conferences between 1994 and 2011 “consistently deployed a market discourse that concentrated on commercial interests, global competitiveness and the discipline’s international standing.”

### 2.3.3 Knowledge production and theory making

Recently, with the ongoing questioning surrounding the relevance of Eurocentric theory in the African context, there has been an uprising, “a quest by African scholars for the indigenisation of psychological knowledge, and the advancement of African paradigms, definitions and practices of psychology” (Johnston, 2015, p377). According to Edwards (2014) most psychology training programmes incorporate a critical or community psychology underpinning, however, there has not been sufficient attention given to an African philosophy or indigenous psychology orientation. Edwards (2014) proposes that rural institutions in South Africa are positioned to have the unique opportunity to advance, among others, research in rural communities and indigenous knowledge production. On a promising note, Macleod and Howell (2013) report that between 2004 and 2012, the relative number of South African articles and/or abstracts published concerning theory had doubled in both the South African Journal of Psychology and PsycINFO; this transpires as an increase of South African psychological knowledge production. However, the need for an increase of theoretical development in local psychology continues.

### 2.3.3.1 Indigenous psychology

Indigenous psychology has grown in popularity in non-Western countries the world over in the last three decades (Allwood & Berry, 2006) as a reaction against the universalist claims of Euro-American psychological theory (Kim, Park & Park, 2000; Allwood, 2011). According to Allwood and Berry (2006), Indigenous Psychologies are generally seen as an attempt to generate a local psychology within a culturally specific context.

In South Africa, the Forum of African Psychology (FAP) has recently been established as a division of PsySSA (Painter, Kiguwa & Böhmke, 2013). The Forum of African Psychology (n.d) states its mission as being “to actively advance African-centred psychology that reflects African philosophy and worldviews and aims “to extend our psychological paradigms and embrace Africanness – identity, culture, experiences as well as create a state of unease around the current ideological constraints and stasis of mainstream psychology” (Magwaza, 2013).

### 2.3.3.2 African philosophy and an African psychology

According to Edwards (2014, p56), central to the practice and development of African psychology is the concept *uMoya* (spirit) – this philosophy encompasses “ancestral consciousness” as well as the beliefs and practices which have maintained equilibrium within African communities for centuries. Edwards (2014), furthermore states that this ancestral consciousness together with the custom of *uBuntu* is essential for the practice of psychological counselling in South Africa as a primary method of promoting health and preventing illness. According to Mkabela (2015, p284), for many rural Africans all of life’s incidences involve “social actions”, these are viewed and understood through belief systems; “[i]n the African indigenous

belief life is urgencied in ancestors, witchcraft and other related spiritual phenomena.” Moreover, Edwards (2014) purports that a phenomenological investigation into *uMoya* revealed neurophysiological correlations indicating decreases in “respiration, delta activity, and beta activity as well as associated patterns of a coherent, relaxed, and alert state of waking consciousness ... .”

Ratele (2014), on the other hand, takes a critical view of the arguments for an African psychology and suggests that there appears to be ambivalence with regards to African psychology’s political and theoretical status. Ratele (2014, p55) goes on to accuse African psychology of having not “done enough critical self-assessment and autobiographical writing about its objects.” He furthermore proposes that African psychology has become preoccupied with “a sterile idea of culture” as well as of Western psychology. Ratele (2014) calls for a critical African psychology that is self-conscious and reflexive while focusing on the unique and tangible realities of people’s lives as opposed to looking to mythological ideas. Similarly, Young, Bantjes and Kagee (2016), caution that adopting an essentialist view of African culture denies the natural ebb and flow, and variation inherent in worldviews and negates points of connection and interception between various cultures.

The Forum of African Psychology (n.d) appears to endeavour to address some of these critiques as can be seen in the objectives listed on their website which include: an integration of Western and African psychology; initiating programmes aimed at improving access to psychological services; responding to the broader socio-political context of Africa; and engaging in robust African-centred research.

#### 2.3.4 Sub-disciplines of psychology and their responses to South Africa's context

While it is clear that the emerging field of African psychology is yet to find its proverbial feet, we may be able to look at some of the sub-disciplines of psychology in order to gauge the profession's response to the needs of present day South Africa. This discussion is limited to the sub-disciplines of counselling and critical/community psychology as they are informed by values and philosophical assumptions pertinent to the overall theme of this literature review. A discussion on psychological assessment is included because of its historical links to discrimination and injustice.

##### 2.3.4.1 Counselling psychology

Counselling psychology's professional identity in South Africa is vague and contentious (Young, et. al., 2016). The literature postulates that, historically, the main domains of counselling psychology practice have been, and continue to be: development, intervention and remediation (Young, et. al., 2016; Young, 2013). According to Young et. al. (2016), counselling psychology has traditionally placed emphasis on aspects such as empowerment, therapeutic relationship, and context (e.g. political, cultural, social) together with an orientation towards multiculturalism and social justice.

Considering this understanding of counselling psychology, it would appear that it is positioned within the discipline of psychology in such a way as to open possibilities to meet some of the needs of the nation; however, "the potential for counselling psychology to adopt an overt social justice agenda in South Africa remains largely unrealised" (Young, et. al. 2016, p4). In order to step forward and accept its social

justice gambit, counselling psychology is required to align its academic and professional pursuits with the disenfranchised majority of South Africa.

A further critique of counselling psychology in South Africa relates to its uncritical adoption of American epistemology and theoretical models. A call is thus heard in the literature for counselling psychology to become active in the quest to indigenise psychological knowledge and practice in South Africa (Young, et. al., 2016). However, South Africa's precarious context of encompassing both Western and African cultures require counselling psychologists to be able to "move beyond multicultural discourses ... to acknowledge ... the interconnected nature of social categories and ways in which systems of oppression overlap and reinforce one another" (Young, et. al., 2016, p5).

#### 2.3.4.2 Critical (and) community psychology

In an article discussing the development of Community psychology in South Africa, Seedat and Lazarus (2011, p242) accredit 1980's apartheid activist groups such as Psychology and Apartheid and OASSSA for contributing to the establishment of Community psychology as we know it today. As such, present day South African Community psychology rests on the principles of "inclusivity, equity, and social justice." Post-1994, Community psychologists became enthused by government initiatives aimed at reconstruction and development such as the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the Moral Generation Movement (MGM) among others. Much research and practice from Community psychologists thus became supportive of government programmes (Seedat & Lazarus, 2011).



After the 1994 elections, there came a growth in Community psychology literature and publications aimed at influencing psychological training, advancing theory development and confronting racial and gender misrepresentation in knowledge production (Seedat & Lazarus, 2011). Much of the literature of Community psychology incorporates a critical theory and research paradigm. In fact, the importance of a Community psychology approach and Critical psychology understandings have become ubiquitous – “... most South African professional psychology training programmes now include a community and/or critical psychology orientation ...” (Edwards, 2014, p52; Painter, et. al., 2013).

Indeed, in the South African context, the developments of critical and community psychology are largely parallel (Yen, 2008). Painter, Kiguwa & Böhmke (2013) assert, however, that post 1994 critical and community psychology have divorced resulting in a Critical psychology without hands and a Community psychology without self-reflexivity. Community psychology thus now stands accused of “further[ing] the interest of a conservative psychology under radical pretences” and doing little more than to offer reduced-fee services, that merely replicate the ‘medical-model’ of psychology, to lower class (community) clients (Painter, Terre Blanch & Henderson in Frizelle, 2011, p76; see also Pillay 2016). Whilst Critical psychology is charged with becoming merely an academic commodity (Painter, et. al., 2013).

Community psychology in post-Apartheid South Africa is thus urged to maintain fluidity with regards to how it theorises and rationalises such concepts as “community, social change, and transformation” (Seedat & Lazarus, 2011, p252). Critical psychology’s task is to become rooted in a continued quest to create

theoretical understandings of how psychology fulfils its role in society as well as a characterisation of subjectivity and society (Painter, et. al., 2013). As Pillay (2016, p157) states “[w]ithout a radical political soul, community [and critical] psychology suffers two problems: it remains entangled in neo-liberal market forces of academy and it problematically operates within a social welfare model of trying to ‘empower’ ‘communities’ ‘out there’.

#### 2.3.4.3 Psychological assessment

The area of psychological assessment has arguably been one of the most controversial aspects of psychological practice in South Africa - before, during and after apartheid. This is largely related to assessments being used for biased and discriminatory purposes (Laher & Cockcroft, 2014). Be that as it may, assessment remains among the top topics of published psychological literature in South Africa, comprising the largest portion (14.8%) of articles published in the South African Journal of Psychology in 2012 (Macleod & Howell, 2013).

Since 1994, psychological assessment has undergone many positive advances, including the adaptation and standardization of intelligence measures for South Africans of all race groups; the development of aptitude tests and learning potential tests that are based on nonverbal abilities (thus reducing bias); and an increase in South African research and publication on assessment (Laher and Cockcroft, 2014). These developments show a shift in values in the field of psychological assessment, and a movement towards justice and restoration by striving to meet the needs of diversity in the development and administration of psychological assessments.

According to Laher and Cockcroft (2014), however, psychological assessment is still (justifiably) a dubious issue for most South Africans, although there does seem to be some improvement in opinions. It is suggested that if psychological assessment is to continue to grow and make valuable contributions to South Africa, more attention at both training and professional levels needs to be given to the ethical use of assessments. Furthermore, more effort needs to be given to improving the usefulness and accessibility of psychological assessment to the majority of South Africans. "South Africa, with its diverse population, provides a unique context for the development of indigenous knowledge, and this needs to be extended to the field of psychological assessment" (Laher and Cockcroft, 2014, p310).

Thus far this literature review has sought to provide a succinct overview of psychology's relationship with apartheid, both pre- and post- the 1994 democratic elections. A review of current literature regarding psychology in South Africa reveals that while there have been commendable developments, it remains a dynamic field of interest that receives much thought provoking criticism. The concerns mentioned above include the demographic representativeness of the profession and its inaccessibility to the majority of South Africans; the cultural and socio-political relevance of psychology in South Africa; the emergence of an African psychology; and the reactions of Counselling and Critical Community psychology as well as psychological assessment to the socio-political context of South Africa.

## 2.4 Enter: the Narrative approaches

A quick Google search reveals institutions and practitioners the world over who are providing training in Narrative practices, offering resources and information, and serving to create a community network for therapists drawn to Narrative practice

ideas. As Cheryl White (2009, p60) states in her reflections on the beginnings of the Narrative approach and where it is today, “[n]ow, the conversation is an international one.” What follows is an outline of the most recent literature contributing to this international conversation by casting a critical eye on the newest developments in the world of narrative practice in terms of publications and research findings.

Narrative approaches adopt a non-pathologizing view of people and their problems, however, therapists using Narrative practices around the world have begun to engage in empirical research projects and publishing findings regarding the efficacy of the approach for certain diagnosable ‘disorders’. The paragraphs which follow serve to summarise the various studies, largely pilot studies with small sample sizes, which have recently been published (Lopes, Goncalves, Machado, Sinai, Bento and Salgado, 2014).

The findings of a pilot study conducted in 2012 suggest that narrative therapy is potentially an effective intervention for improving the self-management skills of children with ADHD (Looyeh, Kamali and Shafieian, 2012). For this study, group therapy intervention from a Narrative framework was used with children identified as experiencing symptoms characteristic of Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder and although the sample size was small (7 girls) the results proved to be promising. The article argues that group therapy from a Narrative stance compensates for the limited cognitive capacities of young children which makes Cognitive Behavioural Therapy a less successful intervention.

Another pilot study conducted by Cashin, Browne, Bradbury and Mulder (2013) examined the effectiveness of five therapy sessions following a Narrative approach

with 10 young people diagnosed with Autism by using parent and self reports, as well as a salivary cortisol:DHEA ratio. The results of the pilot study suggested improved outcomes on both psychological and biological measures after Narrative intervention with young people experiencing Autism.

In 2014 yet another study was published which sought to explore the effectiveness of Narrative therapy in treating Social Phobia in a group of boys aged 10-11 (Looyeh, Kamali, Ghasemi and Tonawanik, 2014). Traditionally, Behavioural and Cognitive approaches have shown the most empirical support promoting them as effective therapy models for use with people experiencing Social Phobia. This study concluded that the sample of boys experiencing Social Phobia showed improvement of symptoms immediately after intervention as well as 30 days after. This study comprised of a small sample size (n=12), however, the results show evidence that future empirical studies could reveal Narrative intervention as a viable option for therapeutic treatment of Social Phobia.

Although the Narrative approach's view of people and the way they are affected by the stories they live by theoretically lends itself well to assisting those who have experienced trauma, little empirical evidence has been conducted to investigate this. In 2014 the Journal of Traumatic Stress published a study involving 14 veterans diagnosed with PTSD who received psychological intervention using a Narrative approach. Using structured interviews and self-reports at various phases in the therapeutic process, the study revealed evidence to suggest clinically significant decreases in the symptoms experienced by the individuals, as well as a low dropout

rate and a high rate of reported satisfaction (Erbes, Stillman, Wieling, Bera and Leskela, 2014).

Depression is one of the most common reasons for people seeking help from the psychology profession, and currently Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) has the strongest empirical support for treatment efficacy with clients experiencing depression (Lopes,et.al., 2014). Thus, a recent study published in the journal of Psychotherapy Research conducted a controlled clinical trial in order to compare the outcomes of CBT and Narrative therapy on clients with depression. Sixty-three participants were divided into two groups receiving either Narrative or Cognitive-behaviour therapy, and outcomes were measured using the Becks Depression Inventory II (BDI-II) and Outcome Questionnaire-45.2 (OQ-45.2). The results of this study were inconclusive in promoting Narrative therapy as an empirically effective treatment for depression due to a large dropout rate, however, for clients that completed treatment there was effective symptom relief (Lopes, et. al. 2014).

Beaudoin and Zimmerman (2011, 2015) have provided some exciting neurobiological understandings when considering how Narrative therapy might work to reduce the problem situations experienced by clients with these (AD/HD, Autism, Social Phobia, PTSD, Depression) and other difficulties. They have integrated Interpersonal Neurobiology (IPNB) science with Narrative ideas and practices of in order to achieve a richer description of the therapeutic process.

According to Beaudoin and Zimmerman (2011) the brain is biased towards storing information about experiences which carry negative affect, this has been observed at both a cellular and structural level. This bias has particular implications for people experiencing various difficulties, including those mentioned in the paragraphs above,

as the experiences associated with negative affect, for example depression or trauma, become increasingly reinforced as the neural pathways develop and thicken. Once negative affect is created and stored within the brain, an explanation of the experience must be generated, if this occurs frequently the person often ends up with a “problem saturated story or identity (Beaudoin and Zimmerman, 2011). These neurobiological understandings provide important ruminations for therapists in terms of whether therapy is better aimed at managing the developed negative affect neural pathways or at strengthening preferred ones.

The way that these IPNB insights connect with Narrative practices involves understanding that the brain needs mental distance when one is overwhelmed by strong emotions (Siegal cited in Beaudoin and Zimmerman, 2011). The externalisation process in Narrative therapy provides just that. Furthermore, it is understood that memories of experiences are altered each time they are revisited; this implies that each time a remembered experience is discussed in meaningful ways during therapy it is stored in an altered way. The problematic aspects of the memory will thus be stronger if they are reinforced, or weaker if the process of deconstructing problems was used which allows the client to understand experiences in new ways. Moreover, the use of re-authoring practices allows the client to develop and thicken neural pathways related to their preferred ways of being.

In their most recent article, Zimmerman and Beaudoin (2015) place greater emphasis on the importance for Narrative therapists to focus on unique moments in the clients problem saturated story and to invite the client to re-experience their memories in embodied and affect-infused ways. This is based on the Neurobiological

understandings of how memories are formed and reformed both implicitly and explicitly.

Despite these important pilot studies and ardent attempts to make Narrative approaches Evidence Based Treatment options, after reading these articles one is left largely unconvinced. Narrative practice is certainly not an ineffective therapeutic option; however, neither can it be considered a forerunner in terms of efficacy. Rather, Narrative practice is one of many psychotherapeutic models which offer those in need of psychological healing the necessary space and relationship.

In many ways, Narrative approaches appear to have become caught up in the debate that has plagued the mental health field since the earliest days of Freud, in which emphasis is placed on the differences of models in an attempt to out-do the next one and wherein advocates of various models adopt a 'mine's better than yours' attitude. In an article published by the American Psychological Association, Wampold (2011) notes that this hotly debated topic has wielded no significantly convincing evidence to crown a winner amongst the cacophony of psychotherapies. Wampold (2011) does note, however, that what appears to be the most significant of all variables considered necessary for effective therapy, is the therapist him-/her-self.

This notion of the therapist being the most important ingredient necessary for effective therapy is by no means a new one. Indeed, this view may be paralleled to the argument that Narrative approaches cannot be practiced as a therapeutic recipe, but should rather flow from the therapist's authentic adoption of the worldview informing the approach (White, 2007). Certainly, in the context of the present research, it is the underlying philosophical paradigms which therapists using a



Narrative approach adopt, that result in the assumption of it being particularly useful and relevant to the South African context.

#### 2.4.1 The offerings of Narrative practices

Michael White and David Epston are two of the major proponents of Narrative therapy which has its roots in literary theory, cultural psychology, anthropology, philosophy, feminism and social theory, and has been influenced by the writings of Derrida, Bruner, Geertz, and Foucault (Speedy, 2000). It seems prudent to note, however, that although Narrative therapy can be traced to its beginnings based on the ideas of Michael White and David Epston (White, 2009), many other theorists have made contributions which have resulted in various strands falling under the umbrella of Narrative approaches or practices developing. These strands encompass similar understandings to those of White and Epston but include distinguishing nuances and emphases; for example Johnella Bird's (2002) relational consciousness and Freedman and Combs' (1996) focus on the narrative and social construction metaphors in their therapeutic work.

Furthermore, other therapy models which overlap in terms of the philosophical underpinnings and the emphasis placed on language as a system of meaning making, have emerged around the world at a similar time to Narrative therapy. These include the Dialogical Self Theory of Hubert Hermans (2001); Collaborative Therapy introduced by Anderson and Goolishian (1992); and Solution Focused Therapy of Insoo Kim Berg and Steve de Shazer. These postmodern therapies all share an attempt to operate from a different paradigm than that of traditional psychotherapy models, and are dedicated to valuing diversity and being non-pathologising in their view of clients and the problems they experience (Chang, Combs, Dolan, Freedman,

Mitchell and Trepper, 2012). Collectively these models fall under the umbrella of Narrative approaches.

Despite these many similarities, White and Epston's Narrative therapy has a particular and defining characteristic which distinguishes it from the others, that being its intentional commitment to social justice and the political (Madigan, 2012 and Chang, et. al., 2012). In his online blog, Chang (2014) notes that narrative therapists hold the view that the personal, professional, and political are interwoven into all aspects of life, and should thus not be excluded from the therapy room. This is echoed by Bird (2002) when she states that counselling and therapy are always political.

#### 2.4.2 Focus on social justice and the political

Narrative therapy's commitment to social justice and the political is evidenced in the way it links the voices of the marginalised through shared purposes and in doing so makes them more likely to be heard by larger society (Combs and Freedman, 2012).

These marginalised voices include various minority groups, for example, David Nylund's work with the LGBT community in Sacramento (Tilsen and Nylund, 2010); Zimbabwean psychologist, Ncazelo Ncube-Mlilo's 'narratives in the suitcase' project for work with child refugees in South Africa (Dulwich Centre, 2014); and David Denborough's work with the Aboriginal community in Australia. Marginalised voices also include those who have been subjected to societal atrocities such as colonialism and apartheid in South Africa (see Elize Morkel's website). Narrative therapists determine to bring the political into the therapy room by making clients aware of their plights as being connected to larger narratives of injustice as well as the effects of internalised discourses (Guilfoyle, 2015). Guilfoyle (2015) notes that

this can be an arduous task for the Narrative therapist as modern discourses of individualisation have become so elusively powerful that people rarely experience themselves as being socially produced and thus can find it frustrating to engage in conversations about socio-cultural narratives and traditions in the therapy context.

#### 2.4.3 Exposing discourses of power and dominance

Narrative practices adopt an intentional stance towards the power relationship that exists in the therapy room which includes a renegade view of expert knowledge, psychopathology and formulations. For a therapist practising within this paradigm, the process begins from the very first intake interview (Timm, 2015). Timm (2015) describes that during this initial meeting, the client is asked questions which do not solely focus on stories of deficit but also highlight those of hope. This is because Narrative practice, which is informed by the understandings of Michel Foucault, has adopted a critical view of the dominant discourse of illness as being equivalent to the individual. Taking an approach such as this is in support of Combs and Freedman's (2012, p1034) claim that there is "power involved in being in the position to decide which stories will be told and retold, and which will not."

This stance is closely linked to the emphasis that is placed on the therapeutic relationship which Bird (2002, p91) pays particular attention to. Therapists are implored to provide people with the necessary understanding of the therapeutic relationship and possible experiences of it, or "risk subjecting people to powerlessness and dependency". Bird (2002, p91) further relays that the understanding held about the therapeutic relationship either positions therapists as "holders and conveyers of knowledge, or as the negotiators of the possible meanings that can be made of the experiences, feelings and ideas." In this way, emphasis is

placed on a heart and mind connection rather than a detached relationship based on interpretation and analysis. Bird (2002) refers to therapy as an ethical endeavour which is necessarily situated both historically and culturally.

#### 2.4.4 Narrative practice applied in similar contexts

Attention will now be given to global contexts which mirror situations similar to South Africa in which Narrative practices have been successfully implemented. These have been done through individual, family and community approaches.

Narrative approaches to therapy place emphasis on cultural context and sensitivity in the therapeutic process. This does not, however, translate to the assumption that Narrative therapy is seamlessly transferable across all cultures. Rather, the importance of making certain that all therapeutic work done is held responsible for the cultures, people and communities on which it has an impact is stressed. Furthermore, it is noted that the ways in which various cultures engage in Narrative therapy should inevitably inform the way it continues to be practiced (Dulwich Centre, n.d). It thus appears that rather than being a stagnant, 'tried-and-tested' therapeutic approach, Narrative therapy should evolve according to the influence of the culture which it serves.

The Narrative approach to therapy has been used in meaningful ways in a number of countries which are historically embedded in social injustice, violence, and dispossession (Denborough, 2011). Denborough (2011) recounts how the principles of Collective Narrative practice served as an effective vehicle for healing in the war-torn Bosnian city, Srebrenica. By using a Collective Narrative approach, the

facilitators were able to bring unity in diversity, a feat particularly poignant considering that participants consisted of people from historically opposing sides.

The Witnessing Project of Kaethe Weingarten has also been significantly effective in helping to bridge people locked in enmity, her work pays particular attention to replacing 'de-humanising' practices, narratives and ways of thinking with 're-humanising' ones by opening up channels to witness the plight of the other, regardless of how different the other may be (Weingarten, 2003). Weingarten (2003) speaks of her work with Kosovar Albanians who were exposed to horrific levels of military violence and oppression by Serbian forces. She credits the increased understanding and interest in the power of *Witnessing* to the work of Tom Andersen and the more recent 'outsider witnessing' work of Michael White (Denborough, 2005).

Furthermore, in the article *Healing and Justice together: Searching for Narrative Justice*, Australia's colonial past is described as being steeped in acts of marginalisation and historical injustice (Denborough, 2013). The Dulwich Centre Foundation, a giant in the promotion of Narrative therapy, has been successfully using, and providing training in, Narrative therapy in Australia since 1983. Denborough (2013) argues that because the role of counsellors privileges them to be an audience for narratives of social injustice, they have a duty to take action towards healing the hurt that has resulted. He proposes a "Narrative Justice" model for Australia which involves: 1) Receiving, naming, and acknowledging multiple injustice and multiple effects; 2) Eliciting, naming, and acknowledging what has survived – shared ideals and values; and 3) Convening forums of Narrative Justice.

Moving geographically closer to South Africa, Sliep and Meyer-Weitz (2003) describe the success of using Narrative theatre, a practice which combines Narrative practice and Forum theatre, to reduce the experience of fear among Sudanese refugees living in Uganda. The case example given describes the process of externalising fear and finding an alternative story of courage which are both theatrically role-played by community members.

The Tree of Life project, which was developed as a collaboration between David Denborough of the Dulwich Centre in Australia and Ncazela Ncube-Milo, a Zimbabwean psychologist, has shown much success in being implemented across the African continent and around the world. Deborah Gill reflects on her meaningful experience of using this collective narrative practice with children at Gyero orphanage, Nigeria (retrieved from: <http://dulwichcentre.com.au/the-tree-of-life/in-nigeria/>). Moreover, Nwoye (2006, p8) describes her use of an adapted form of Narrative therapy with children and families in Kenya, she states that it is an approach that “respects the cultural demands and realities of the African environment.”

## 2.5 Conclusion

This literature review has sought to explore how psychology is falling short in the context of post-Apartheid South Africa. The discussion then moved on to understanding the rationale for looking at a Narrative approach to therapy as a possible suitor for the practice of psychology in South Africa. It was highlighted that Narrative practice’s emphasis on social justice and deconstruction of power relations positions it well to encourage practitioners to become cognisant and active in using

their professional platforms to make psychology more valuable to the nation. Finally, examples of Narrative practices being applied to similar contexts such as Srebrenica, Australia, Uganda, Nigeria and Kenya were given.

It is not the intention of this review to suggest Narrative practice as a panacea for South African psychology but rather to suggest that as a theoretical model, Narrative approaches to therapy might offer practitioners diverse and meaningful means of engaging with the profession and their clients. Furthermore, Narrative practice's valuing of community, family, relationship and connectedness together with its understanding that identity is relational, relate well to the African philosophy and may thus provide valuable support for the relevance of this approach in South Africa. The proceeding chapter will outline the philosophical and methodological framework used to investigate this assumption.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

*“The research methodology we choose reflects unspoken assumptions that we hold about the world in general, and about knowledge in particular” (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p5).*

#### 3.1 Introduction

In the preceding literature review chapter the current climate surrounding the profession of psychology in South Africa was explored. The accusations lodged against South African psychology were made salient as questions regarding the cultural, social and political relevance of the profession were highlighted. Furthermore, a glimpse into the global conversation regarding Narrative therapy approaches was presented and examples of Narrative approaches being used in similar contexts to South Africa were given. Attention was drawn to the Narrative approach's commitment to social justice, the political and the imperative call for psychological methods to be influenced by the culture in which they are practiced. The argument for Narrative approaches to psychology offering a relevant and accessible method for the South African context thus appears worthy of further inquiry.

In light of the above discovery, the question framing the current research is “What are the major themes that emerge in South African journal articles regarding the use and relevance of Narrative approaches to psycho-social interventions in the post-Apartheid South African context.” The present research thus aims to provide an overview of South African published journal articles regarding the use and relevance



of Narrative approaches to psycho-social interventions in the post-Apartheid South African context. In order to achieve this aim, this study analyses South African published journal articles related to Narrative approaches to psycho-social interventions and the discussions contained therein that speak to its use and relevance in the post-Apartheid South African context. This chapter serves to outline the underlying philosophical assumptions, methods and procedures that were used to address the research question.

### 3.2 Underlying philosophy and theoretical framework

According to Cresswell (2009, p5), “research design ... involves the intersection of philosophy, strategies of inquiry, and specific methods.” Philosophical assumptions are generally latent in research, yet they have a great influence on the application of the research and should thus be identified. Moreover, Darlaston-Jones (2007) posits that the ontology and epistemology within which the research is located is crucial to the research design and methodology of any study.

#### 3.2.1 Post-modernism

As the researcher, I hold a post-modern worldview which is inextricably linked to the way in which I engage with and interpret the data in this study. Post-modernism is a critique that began in the Seventies as a response to the way academia understood knowledge, explanations and most particularly, the possibility of an observer having an objective view of reality. In its essence, post-modernism was borne as a reaction to and a questioning of the era of modernity which encompassed a positivistic epistemology and the assumption that “knowledge is certain, objective and good” (Grenz, 1996, p4). Anderson (cited in Becvar and Becvar, 2009, p87) states that:

Postmodernism has emerged as an alternative form of inquiry among theoreticians and scholars across disciplines who are in the midst of questioning the meta-narrative, the certainty, and the methods and practices of modernism in traditional science, literature, history, art and the human sciences and who are exploring alternative conceptions and descriptions.

According to Anderson (1997), the term 'post-modernism' specifies a philosophical movement which incorporates the ideas of philosophers such as Bakhtin, Derrida, Foucault, Wittgenstein, and many others. The roots of the post-modern movement are diverse and far reaching (Hicks, 2004) and the term is used in many varied ways with little consensus (Gergen, 2001). Indeed, it is proposed that post-modernism "is a stance one takes towards a theory and a way of looking at theory, rather than a theory itself" (Leary, 1994, p435).

### 3.2.2 Social Constructionism

Social constructionist theory is closely connected to the post-modern worldview and is the underlying ontology of this research design. The constructionist ontology centres on the rejection of a single, absolute and knowable truth or reality and rather subscribes to the notion of multiple perspectives and realities (Gergen, 1985). This, in turn, contributes to the epistemological argument that all realities and/or knowledges are constructed socially by people in relationship with each other and their experiences. Realities are the result of "cultural, historical, political, and social norms that operate within that context and time" (Darlaston-Jones, 2007, p 19). Furthermore, emphasis is placed on the subjectivity of reality, the conviction being that individual understandings and experiences influence the reality of each person as they attempt to make sense of their world and experiences; "each individual

reality is true for the person because he or she experiences it but it is independent of that person due to his or her inability to alter it” (Darlaston-Jones, 2007, p20).

The role of language is crucial to a social constructionist framework which posits that society is created through language by people who exist in language (Gergen & Gergen, 1991). The traditional notion of language being a true reflection or picture of the world is refuted and rather replaced with the idea that the way in which words are used generates the meaning of the world. These social constructionist ideas are credited to the work of Wittgenstein and essentially indicate that “language ... is not a mirror of life, it is the doing of life itself”; language is thus seen as an act of creation (Gergen, 1999, p35). Wittgenstein further proposed the metaphor of language as a game which thus has particular rules prescribed to it, for example in the way we may greet one another or respond to certain communication cues (Gergen, 1999). These rules are what give language its meaning and are context specific – located in culture, history and time. This notion has particular consequences for the traditional ‘truth’ and knowledge claims held in languages (particularly scientific ones), which are seen as holding truth only according to the particular rules of the particular group using that particular language (Gergen, 1999).

In the context of the present research, the data is comprised of journal articles which are written in language that is subject to the particular rules of Narrative approaches (which falls under the post-modern and social constructionist umbrellas), as well as the rules of academic writing and psychology. Thus, certain words only hold significant meaning in this research because of the specific context in which they have been written and interpreted. The articles under study were selected because they were written in the context of South Africa which holds specific rules about the

way people, their experiences and their environments might be described and the meaning these descriptions carry for the reader. Thus these articles hold truth only within the context of Narrative understandings as they are practiced in the South African context.

As I engage with the articles, I understand that I am not a passive perceiver of the texts but rather I am actively involved in creating the meaning of them as I read each one, an understanding adopted from reader-oriented contemporary literary theory (Selden, Widdowson & Brooker, 2005, p46). According to this theory “[i]t is the reader who applies the code in which the message is written and in this way *actualizes* what would otherwise remain only potentially meaningful”, thus “[t]he meaning of the text is never self-formulated; the reader must act upon the textual material in order to produce meaning.” This meaning is created out of my own unique experiences, perspectives and reality.

### 3.3 Research Design

The aim of the current study is to provide an overview of South African published journal articles regarding the use and relevance of Narrative approaches to psycho-social interventions in the post-Apartheid South African context. A content analysis is well suited when the purpose of the study is to collect data from literature, as it is a modest approach with few resource requirements other than time and input from the researcher and an available sample. Generally content analysis is a fundamentally deductive and positivist approach, involving the counting of words or phrases; however, in the current study these words were viewed through the social constructionist lens described above and thus seen as having particular meanings

within the context in which the articles were read as opposed to holding any absolute and objective truth. In this way, this post-modern and social constructionist informed research is done in a pragmatic way by generating quantitative data for qualitative analysis. Thus, a sequential explanatory mixed methods research design, making use of both quantitative and qualitative content analysis was employed for this purpose.

A mixed methods research design involves the collecting, analysing and combining of both quantitative and qualitative data at any stage of the research process (Maree, 2010). This enables the researcher to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study by providing different perspectives of the data; in essence, numerical and textual information. Indeed, mixed methods research involves more than the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, “it involves the use of both approaches in tandem so that the overall strength of a study is greater than either qualitative or quantitative research” (Cresswell, 2009, p4). Although this approach to research is relatively new, it has come to be recognised as the third approach to research across various fields, including the behavioural, social and health sciences and is growing in legitimacy.

The purpose of a sequential explanatory mixed methods approach is to clarify the quantitative findings by interpreting them qualitatively (Maree, 2010). The motivation for such a design is that while the quantitative results give a broad answer to the ‘what’ of the research question, the qualitative results elaborate and refine this general overview to answer the ‘why’ and/or ‘how’. Thus, a mixed methods research design entails collecting data in two phases. In the first phase quantitative data is collected and analysed; and in the second phase qualitative methods are used to clarify the quantitative findings (Schram, 2016).

For the first phase of this study, classical content analysis, which is typically a quantitative research method, was used (Neuman, 2011). Classical content analysis involves the systematic examination of objects of social communication, for example texts (Berg, 2008), to provide a numerical description of the texts being studied (Neumann, 2011). The data is then analysed, generally using graphs and/or charts. "Content analysis reduces the complexity of a collection of texts. Systematic classification and counting of texts units distil a large amount of material into a short description of some of its features" (Bauer, 2000, p. 132).

With regards to the current research, quantitative content analysis was selected as being the most appropriate method for providing a broad overview of the literature by identifying the frequency with which themes relating to the research question occurred in the sample texts. These themes are made up of words which carry meaning specifically within the context of Narrative understandings. In order to extrapolate the relevance and use of Narrative approaches to psycho-social interventions in post-Apartheid South Africa, a quantitative content analysis on its own would not suffice. Indeed, this type of content analysis can be useful for uncovering the content of a text, but it cannot be used for interpreting the significance of the findings (Neuman, 2011). Neuman (2011, p363) quotes Holsti's caution that "Content analysis may be considered as a supplement to, not a substitute for, subjective examination of documents."

For the second phase of this study, in order to subjectively examine and understand the significance of the quantitative findings, a qualitative content analysis was conducted. According to Hatch (2002, p148), "data analysis is a systematic search for meaning"; it is a means of communicating the knowledge gained from the

research to others. Through qualitative content analysis, the researcher can identify relationships, themes and patterns that allow her to make interpretations.

Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p1278) define qualitative content analysis as “a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns.” Qualitative content analysis moves the research beyond simply counting words and phrases found in texts and seeks to uncover meanings, themes and patterns (Zhang and Wildermuth, 2009). Qualitative content analysis can be used to provide a textual account of the themes that emerge from the data and relate specifically to the purpose of the research.

### 3.4 Research questions

The mixed methods content analysis which was applied to the data gathered in this research focused on Narrative approaches to psycho-social interventions in the post-Apartheid South African context. The analysis aimed to identify the ‘*what*’ and the ‘*how*’ in each journal article which represent the two main cogs of this research project. Namely, what are the authors of the journal articles frequently saying about Narrative approaches to psycho-social intervention and its application in South Africa? And, how does this relate to South Africa’s socio-political and economical context?

In terms of the first cog, the *what*, the questions framing the analysis of each article were:

- What are the most frequent themes found in literature regarding Narrative approaches in South Africa?

- What areas of praxis are Narrative approaches to psycho-social interventions most frequently used in?

With regard to the second cog, the *how*, the following questions were considered:

- How do the identified themes relate to the South African context and how does this translate to cultural and/or socio-political relevance?
- How are the themes identified in the articles related to one another?
- How do I as the reader/researcher respond to the way Narrative approaches are represented in the texts?

### 3.5 Data collection

Data was collected in the form of academic journal articles through the use of a desktop study of the secondary data. The journal articles used pertained to Narrative approaches to psycho-social interventions in South Africa and were published after 1994. Once articles meeting the delimiting requirements were found, they were included as part of the data set for analysis. Thus, the entire sample consisting of 58 journal articles (n=58) formed the data set.

### 3.6 Sampling strategy and units of analysis

Academic articles were accessed through the University of Fort Hare's online databases from selected reputable South African psychology journals, namely: South Africa Journal of Psychology (SAJP), the Journal of Psychology in Africa (JPA), Psychology in Society (PINS), the journal of Contemporary Family Therapy (CFT), and the HTS theological studies journal.

For the purposes of this project, a systematic sampling strategy was used. This strategy refers to sampling that selects units of analysis according to a



predetermined plan Haslam & McGarty, 2003). Journal articles which met the delimiting requirements formed the sample frame. Given the divergent roots and stances of Narrative approaches, article titles and keywords were visually scanned for appropriateness in an attempt to be as inclusive as possible. Articles were searched according to the following pre-determined criteria in order to ensure relevance:

1. Only those articles/texts published post 1994, with specific reference to the South African context, were selected for this study;
2. Articles directly relating to Narrative therapy and Collaborative therapy;
3. Articles relating to the broader critical psychology, feminism, post-modernism and social-constructionism in which Narrative therapy is grounded;
4. Articles relating to family and systems therapy, community and participatory psychology and storytelling.

Therefore, the sampling technique employed was that of non-probability purposive sampling. Non-probability sampling involves those techniques in which there is no identifiable probability of every member of the population being used in the sampling frame (Haslam and McGarty, 2003); whilst purposive sampling involves the selection of members of a population who are identified according to specific characteristics.

The unit of analysis was the actual journal article, which appeared in any of the aforementioned South African psychological journals.

### 3.7 Data management

A computer-assisted qualitative data analysis programme (CAQDAS), was used to manage the data for this study. CAQDAS programmes are, in essence, concept

databases that allow the researcher to create codes which are then used to organise and relate the data in order to support the analysis (Zamawe, 2015).

In the case of the current study, Nvivo 11 was selected for use. This programme can be seen as a tool for indexing large amounts of qualitative data which assists in identifying key themes, as well as the frequency with which the codes and themes emerge from the data.

### 3.8 Coding and analysis

The current study was conducted using a mixed methods approach making use of both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. A mixed methods approach enables the researcher to employ the strengths inherent in both qualitative and quantitative data analysis techniques (Creswell, 2009). For the purposes of this study, a sequential explanatory method was used, thus, according to Schram (2016) the quantitative data was given priority and the mixing took place by connecting the quantitative data to qualitative findings.

According to Krippendorff (2004, p24), "Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use." The coding system comprises the rules that were followed whilst observing and recording information from the texts (Neuman, 2011). "Coding requires carefully looking at text and converting it in a very systematic manner into measures of significant words, symbols, or messages" (Neuman, 2011, p364).

For the purposes of the current study summative content analysis identified by Hsieh and Shannon (2005) was employed; this type of analysis involves initially identifying and quantifying specific words in order to contextualise their use. According to Hsieh

and Shannon (2005, p1283) “[a]nalyzing for the appearance of a particular word or content in textual material is referred to as manifest content analysis” and translates to a quantitative step.

Indeed, Krippendorff (2004) proposes that there is an exponential correlation between the frequency of phrases used and importance or emphasis they are given within a text. Thus, enumerative information was gathered for processing in the initial quantitative thrust of the current research by generating a word frequency query list using Nvivo 11. Krippendorff (2004, p105) refers to these types of queries as “syntactical distinctions” and states that “[w]ords are the smallest and, as far as reliability is concerned, the safest recording unit for written documents.” This data was then clustered into synonyms and derivatives, categorised into themes, sorted in terms of the frequency with which the phrases occurred in rank order and then summarised in the form of tables and graphs. The identified themes were thus derived directly and inductively from the data (Zhang & Wildermuth, 2009) and in accordance with the research questions.

The objective of this mixed methods content analysis was not merely to obtain a numerical account of the textual data but was further concerned with the “meanings, intentions, consequences and context” of the data (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008, p4). The second phase of a qualitative content analysis was employed in order to provide textual accounts of the emergent themes which related to the purpose of this study and were guided by the research questions. “Qualitative content analysis was developed primarily in anthropology, qualitative sociology, and psychology, in order to explore the meanings underlying physical messages” (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). Hsieh and Shannon (2005, p1283) posit that the aim of a summative content

analysis, which was used for the purposes of this study, stretches further than the initial quantitative step and includes “latent content analysis” which “refers to the process of interpretation.” Thus, a summative content analysis focuses on uncovering the latent meaning of content.

In the current study, the themes which emerged inductively from the quantitative analysis were used as the deductive coding framework for the qualitative analysis in order to ensure that instances of the identified themes which were alluded to but not explicitly stated were included in the results. During this phase, the constant comparison method encouraged by Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) was employed. This method involves comparing any text assigned to a specific category with other texts that have already been assigned to that category, as well as the integration of categories and their properties through the use of interpretative memos.

Finally, descriptions and interpretations of the content and context were made in order to provide answers to the ‘*how*’ questions of this study. According to Zhang and Wildemuth (2009), the act of drawing conclusions and making inferences is a crucial stage in the qualitative content analysis process which is heavily reliant on the researcher’s reasoning abilities.

### 3.9 Limitations

Due to resource and time constraints, it was not feasible to conduct a larger scale study with a greater number of articles. However, the study achieves its aim by giving an indication of the relevance and use of Narrative approaches to psycho-social interventions in the post-Apartheid South African context. However, it is

possible that a comprehensive empirical study, including the opinions of both psychologists and clients who engage in the Narrative processes, may have been more appropriate.

According to Schram (2016, p2625), who draws on Creswell and Plano Clark's definitions and terminology of mixed methods research, data which is mixed using the sequential explanatory model is referred to as being "connected" which is the weakest form of mixing. Moreover, this study exclusively makes use of inductive methods of coding.

Lastly, the results of this study are, by nature, subjective as they reflect the conclusions drawn by a researcher who approached the data with opinions, understandings and experiences which coloured the way she interpreted it.

### 3.10 Ethical considerations

This study has not involved human participants; there were thus no ethical dilemmas. Concerns regarding plagiarism were avoided as all articles are referenced according to the APA referencing standard. Moreover, in an effort to be transparent, the researcher's worldview was made explicit.

### 3.11 Conclusion

This chapter served to outline the methods and procedures used to address the research question. The mixed methods research design using a sequential explanatory model was described and justified in terms of the current study. Following this, the underlying philosophies of post-modernism and social

constructionism were explored and related to the researcher's post-modern world-view which includes a reader-oriented view of interacting with texts. The sampling strategy was then identified and explained as non-probability purposive sampling before moving on to a brief discussion of data management using Nvivo 11 software after which the coding and analysis process was made salient. Three limitations of the study were identified as being a small sample size which did not include personal interviews, the mixed methods model which is accused of being a weak mix, and the admitted subjectivity of the researcher. Due to the textual nature of the data, there were limited ethical limitations discussed.

The proceeding chapter will consist of the quantitative analysis results. These results will then be discussed and interpreted qualitatively as each of the identified emerging themes will be examined. This will be followed by a section in which the way the themes are linked to one another is discussed, and finally a critical reflection of the reader/researcher's reaction to the texts will be given.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The methods and procedures outlined in the previous chapter described the processes followed in the current research. This research was conducted from a post-modern, social constructionist theoretical framework and followed a sequential explanatory mixed methods design making use of quantitative and qualitative analysis.

The proceeding chapter serves to report the analysis results of the current study which are presented in two sections – first the quantitative content analysis results, followed by a qualitative description of these results. The aim of the first section – the quantitative content analysis – is to answer the questions: “In what areas of psychological praxis is a Narrative approach most frequently used in sample articles?” and “What are the most frequent themes found in the articles regarding Narrative therapy in South Africa?” In order to interpret the quantitative data, the qualitative content analysis section will be framed by the following questions: “How do the identified themes relate to the South African context and, how does this translate to cultural and/or socio-political relevance?; “How are the identified themes related to one another?” and “How do I as the reader/researcher respond to the way Narrative practices are represented in the texts?”

#### **4.2 Quantitative content analysis results**

For the initial quantitative analysis thrust of this study, Nvivo 11 was first used to highlight the spread across various counselling/therapy areas in which Narrative

therapy is most frequently used, these results are set out in Table 4.1 below. Table 4.1 shows that 29 articles (50%) relate to family therapy; 12 (20%) relate to career counselling; while 16 (27%) make reference to pastoral counselling or theology and 10 (17%) to community psychology.

Moreover, a graph depicting the spread of articles over the 12 year search period (1994 – 2016) is displayed in Figure 4.1 which furthermore depicts the linear trend of articles published over the specified time. The graph indicates that although there have been sporadic fluctuations in the number of articles published between 1994 and 2016 there is a general upward trend in articles published in more recent years.

**Table 4.1**

*The spread across various counselling/therapy areas in which Narrative therapy is most frequently used*

Area of counselling/therapy	Number of References	Number of Sources
Family therapy	385	29
Career counselling	330	12
Community psychology	137	10
Pastoral counselling or theology	249	16



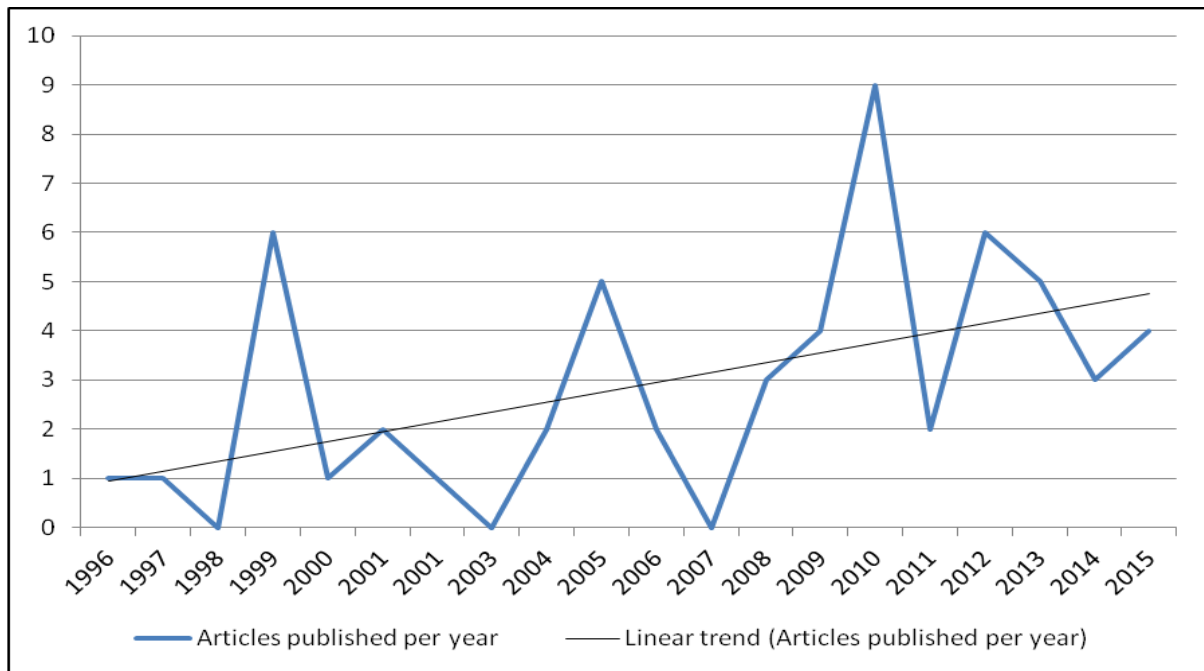


Figure 4.1: Number of articles in the dataset published per year, including linear trend.

Furthermore, during the quantitative content analysis phase, Nvivo 11 was used to generate a word frequency list indicating the most frequently used words across all 58 journal articles. This word list was then visually scanned in order to remove unwanted words not pertaining to the research questions. Unwanted words included, for example, 'South', 'Africa', 'psychology', 'also', 'journal', among others. The final list comprised of 200 words which were manually clustered, first according to stemmed words (for example, counselling, counsellor, counsellors etc.), and then according to inductive themes in line with the research questions.

The results of this quantitative analysis formed the coding categories which were then used deductively as each article was read. As the researcher, I was concerned with finding instances in the data where particular themes were hinted at but not

explicitly named. These instances were rare in the data and did not significantly impact the final quantitative results.

Four themes consisting of 59 coding categories were identified. The themes that emerged from the data include: viewing people in context; listening to the telling of stories; theoretical constructs of a Narrative approach; and social phenomena (see Appendix 1). The coding was done in a specific manner so as to establish how frequently each theme occurred in the entire data set (n=58) (figure 4.2), while also being able to determine the total number of articles which highlighted each theme (figure 4.3).

‘Theoretical constructs of a Narrative approach’ was the most frequently reoccurring theme throughout the dataset accounting for 33,5% of the coding instances. ‘Social phenomena’ accounted for 29,2% of the coded data; ‘viewing people in context’ accounted for 19.3%;and ‘listening to the telling of stories’ accounted for 17,9%.

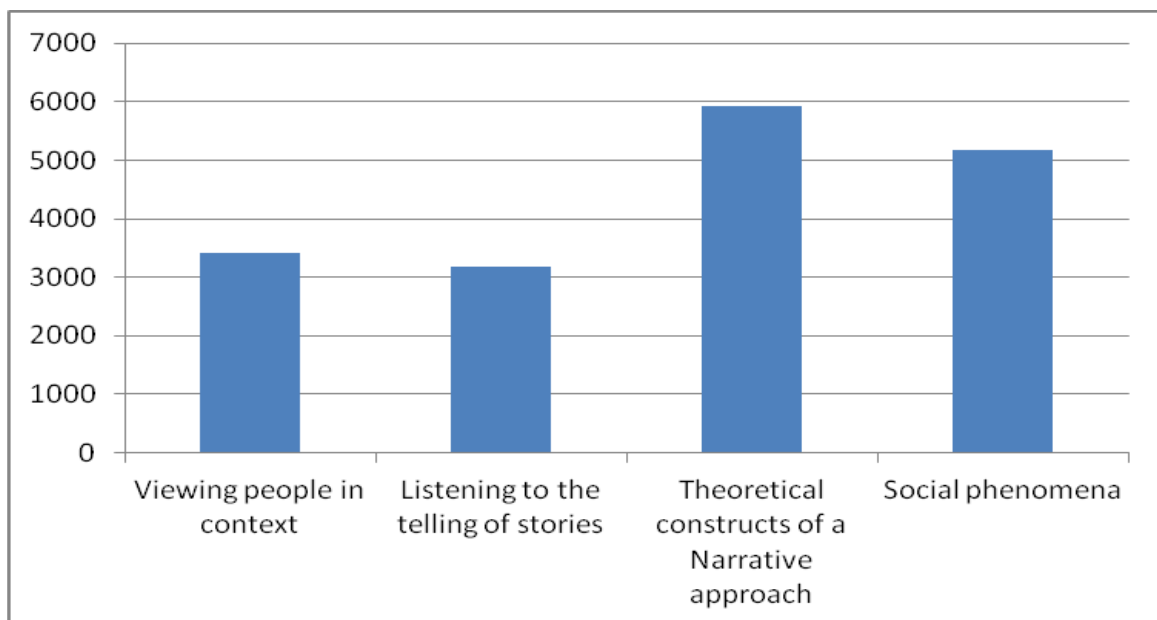


Figure 4.2: Graph depicting occurrence of each theme in the entire dataset (n=58)

Out of the 58 articles within the sample, 57 articles (98%) mentioned 'theoretical constructs of a Narrative approach'; 56 (96%) mentioned 'viewing people in context'; 53 (91%) made reference to 'listening to the telling of stories'; and 52 (89%) mentioned 'social phenomena'.

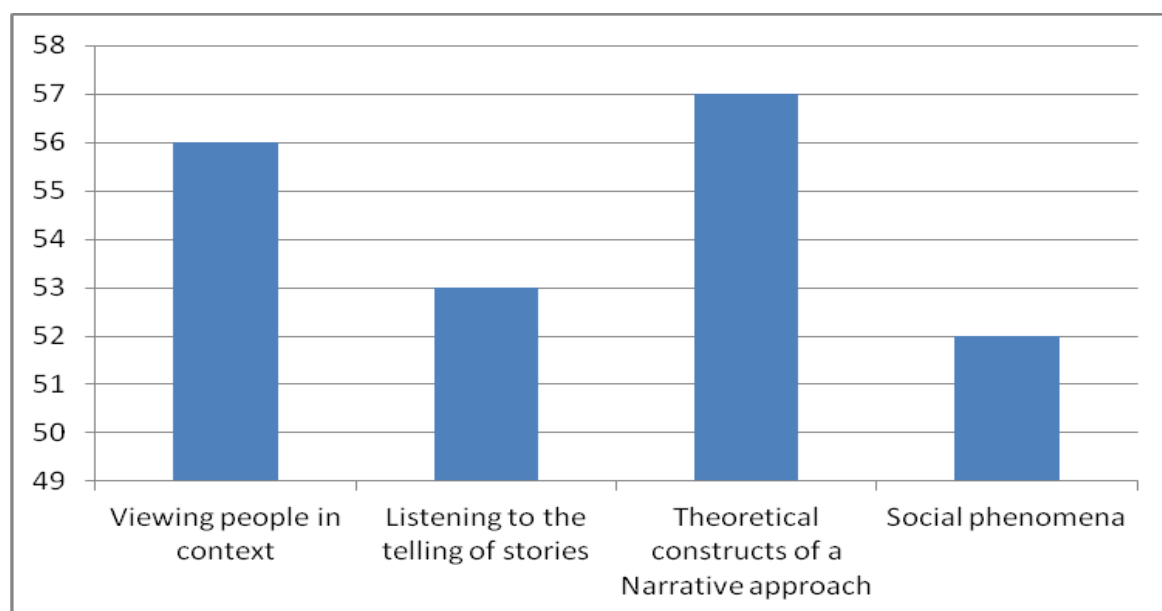


Figure 4.3: Total number of articles in the dataset (n=58) mentioning each theme

### 4.3 Qualitative content analysis

The quantitative data reported above will now be interpreted using qualitative content analysis in line with the sequential explanatory research design followed in this study. The primary segment of this qualitative analysis will respond to the question – “How do the identified themes relate to the South African context and does this translate to cultural and/or socio-political relevance?” Following this, links between the themes will be suggested in order to answer the question – “How are the identified themes related to one another?” Finally, the researcher will take a critically reflexive position in order to respond to the question – “How do I as the

reader/researcher respond to the way Narrative practices are represented in the texts?

#### 4.3.1 Discussion of themes

In order to investigate the research question – “How do the identified themes relate to the South African context and does this translate to cultural and/or socio-political relevance?” – each theme will now be described and interpreted. Thus, selected findings will be presented for discussion in sections with the corresponding theme as the heading for the four identified themes – ‘Viewing people in context’, listening to the telling of stories’, ‘theoretical constructs of a Narrative approach’, and ‘social phenomena’. Once each theme has been described and interpreted, particular attention will be paid to how these themes relate to the findings set out in the literature review pertaining to the relevance of psychology in the South Africa context. References made to primary documents will be denoted as (Px), where x refers to the number of the primary document (see appendix A for a list of the primary documents).

#### **Theme 1: Viewing people in context**

This theme refers to instances in the data where the articles placed emphasis on the contexts in which people live. Contexts identified include: cultural, traditional, local or indigenous, family, social, community, relationship, political, history and South African contexts. Viewing people in context is particularly important to postmodern Narrative approaches which adopt a decidedly anti-individualist perspective (Madigan, 2012). One author relays the overall essence of this theme: *“All experiences and constructed meanings are ... embedded in context and the person’s relation with that context”* (P9).

**Table 4.2***Composition of codes for theme 1*

Theme	Code	Percentage
<i>Viewing people in context</i>	Culture/cultural	29%
	Situation/context	16%
	Local/indigenous	9%
	Society	8%
	Relationship/s	8%
	Traditional	6%
	History	5%
	Political context	5%
	Community	4%
	Family/system	4%
	Social	3%
	South African/national	3%

As can be seen in Table 4.2, the largest section of this theme (29%) is found under the code “culture or cultural”. The validation of this code is highlighted in one article which proposes that: *“how a person perceives or makes sense of his or her world is informed by his or her social and cultural context”* (P1). Moreover, the sentiment of this code is encapsulated when the author states: *“She viewed her encounter ... as a “cross-cultural encounter” and respected that the person belonged to her own unique cultural context and way of viewing the world”* (P1).

When the question of whether this theme translates to relevance is posed (in terms of the argument outlined in the literature review), it becomes clear that within this

sample of articles (n=58), a large portion of emphasis is placed on cultural context. Furthermore, significant attention is given to the codes “local or indigenous” (9%), “society” (8%), traditional (6%) and “political” (5%). These codes directly relate to some of the grievances lobbied against the current practice of psychology in South Africa and indicate that the political activist and social justice calls of Narrative therapy are echoed by the authors of South African Narrative therapy texts (Combs & Freedman, 2012). *“Therapists cannot be neutral to the political dimensions that touch the lives of all South Africans and have to be concerned with the emergent needs of the population”* (P5).

In a country like South Africa, the current political context is inextricably connected to the historical (5%) context of the nation (3%), and this cannot be ignored when engaging in psycho-social interventions. Weingarten (2004) describes how the trauma experiences as a result of political violence can be passed through the generations, even if it has not been directly experienced. According to Weingarten (2004, p53), by acknowledging histories of political violence, therapists and counsellors are positioned to open “opportunities for inquiry, reflection, understanding, and change for those stuck in current struggles related to or aggravated by residues of political violence that insinuate themselves into the bodies, minds, and spirits of those who were not exposed to the political violence itself.”

This view of intergenerational trauma in families is related to the Narrative approach’s emphasis on family/systems (4%) and relationship (8%) as opposed to the individual. In fact, many of the main proponents of this post-modern approach are those with a background in systems theory such as Tom Andersen, Michael White, David Epston and Harlene Anderson (Becvar & Becvar, 2009). In the South

African context, it is particularly important for counsellors and psychologists to remain critical about imposing westernised views of family onto their clients. As one article states: *“Therapists have to be aware of and learn to function comfortably within this diffused in between space, rather than expecting clients to fit in with their expectations of what a family or a therapy session should be like, trying to impose dominant western norms on clients, or romanticising mythical, static African cultures”* (P4).

In order to achieve this, *“[t]he implications are that family therapists must move out into the community, school, suburbs, towns, and districts and join forces with other professionals and paraprofessionals in order to establish community based intervention programmes and learn about the processes of empowerment, not only treatment and prevention”* (P5). Thus, social (3%) relationships within both family and community (4%) systems are integral to post-modern, narrative approaches to psycho-social interventions. The recurring theme of ‘viewing people in context’ which was found in South African Narrative articles suggests that Narrative approaches in South Africa can be seen as having cultural, social and political sensitivity. They are thus situated in sharp contrast to the traditional approaches under criticism in current literature for their individualist ideologies. Furthermore, the articles in this study are shown to align with the arguments presented in the literature review which situate Narrative approaches as being critical of westernised ideologies and rather adapting to be congruent with the context which they serve (Dulwich Centre, n.d).

## **Theme 2: Listening to the telling of stories**

This theme refers to instances in the data where the articles placed emphasis on listening to the telling of stories. Codes identified within this theme include: story or

stories, narrative or narratives, understanding, question or questions, listen, tell, talk, and conversation or dialogue. The concept of narratives or stories is a central construct to the Narrative approach – “it is through the ‘stories we tell ourselves and others that we live the life, hide from it, harmonise it, canalise it, have a relationship with it, shape it, accept it, are broken by it, or flow with life’” (Theron & Bruwer, 2006, p449). *“Storytelling and story-listening is an avenue to recognise the Other, and the process entails collective reflexivity, mutual learning, and engagement where the balance between recognition and differentiation is navigated and negotiated”* (P58).

The therapist seeks to gain an ‘understanding’ (12%) of the problem that is as close to the client’s understanding as possible through their ‘listening’ (7%) as well as the ‘questions’ they ask (10%) – *“all questions are based on the crucial idea that people do not relate to the problematic issue ‘out there’ but to their understanding of the problematic issue”* (P3). In this way, from a Narrative understanding, therapy or counselling is understood to be a ‘conversation or dialogue’ (9%) between the therapist and client – *“By approaching the family therapy session as a therapeutic conversation, imposed rules and predetermined prescriptions diminish”* (P2) – see table 4.3.

The concept of ‘stories’ is integral to Narrative approaches. Whilst listening to their clients’ stories, Narrative therapists and counsellors pay close attention not only to what is being said, but also the way it is being said and the meaning it carries for the person (Bird, 2002). This is because the stories people tell about themselves and their lives, as well as the language and descriptions they use have the potential to be limiting and inhibiting. The aim of the Narrative therapeutic conversation is to find new ways to create stories and words that carry possibilities previously unexplored by the client.



According to Bird (2002), expressions, or stories, are always metaphoric. What people say, and how they describe an event or their lives is as close as they can get to the experience, but they are not the truth. People get stuck in problematic stories about themselves and their lives when they make conclusions based on these expressions which they consider to be true, in Narrative conversations alternative descriptions are explored in order to generate new possibilities (Bird, 2002).

**Table 4.3**

*Composition of codes for theme 2*

Theme	Code	Percentage
<i>Listening to the telling of stories</i>	Story/stories	37%
	Understanding	12%
	Themes	11%
	Questions	10%
	Conversation/dialogue	9%
	Tell/telling	8%
	Listening	7%
	Talk	6%

In order to gain insight into whether this theme corresponds to cultural and/or socio-political relevance in South Africa, it is important to cast attention to the fact that *“certain cultures, as observed especially amongst black South Africans, prefer oral histories to the written word”* (P29). The implication is that the art of storytelling, the familiarity of it and the understanding of its centrality to our lives makes a Narrative approach lend itself well to the South African cultural context. However, in making blanket statements such as these, authors run the risk of drawing thin cultural

conclusions in their attempt to be culturally sensitive or aware. This relates to the essentialist view of African culture cautioned against in the Literature Review of Chapter 2 (Ratele, 2014). The concern with views such as this is a lack of critical engagement with, for example, the history of sub-standard education of black people during the apartheid era which continues to have negative educational consequences in the present day. On the other hand, it also does not consider the effects of growing globalisation and the increased use of technology amongst South Africans of all races, which includes text platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Whatsapp.

When stories are listened to in therapy that is conducted from a post-modern, Narrative perspective, therapists aim to engage with their client in a dialogue that is propelled by the therapist's curiosity and genuine desire to understand the client's situation (Anderson & Goollishian, 1992). There is no analysis from an all-knowing therapist using an interpretive lens borrowed from a foreign context. This aspect of listening and storytelling thus implies that Narrative approaches used in South Africa offer an alternative view of the client, their difficulties and their situation which does not impose a Western worldview on clients.

### **Theme 3: Theoretical constructs of a Narrative approach**

This theme refers to instances in the data where the articles make reference to the various theoretical constructs of a Narrative approach. Codes identified within this theme include: meaning, discourses, problems, construction, power, identity, hope, language, alternative, dominant, action, postmodern, positioning, respect, philosophy, metaphor, ethics, Foucault, unique, critical and possibilities. Thus, this multifaceted (yet not exhaustive) theme comprises 21 codes which all relate to the

theoretical and/or philosophical underpinnings central to a Narrative approach to therapy – see table 4.4. Indeed Narrative work surpasses being merely a therapy technique, Freedman and Combs (1996, p1) quote Michael White as saying:

Is this work better defined as a world view? Perhaps, but even this is not enough. Perhaps it's an epistemology, a philosophy, a personal commitment, a politics, an ethics, a practice, a life, and so on.

The understanding is that in order to engage in Narrative practice authentically, it is essential for the therapist or counsellor to have a firm grasp on and commitment to the philosophical foundations and epistemology on which it is based. Thus, one finds that almost all articles published (98%) make reference to theoretical and/or philosophical terms. It is likely that this characteristic of literature written from a Narrative perspective may result in it feeling foreign or even inaccessible to those engaging with the language and understandings of Narrative approaches for the first time. Due to the vast number of codes comprising this theme, the following discussion will make use of the more predominant codes as overarching codes, under which various other codes will be grouped and discussed. Thus, attention will primarily be given to the codes: meaning, discourses, construction, power and identity as overarching codes

Creating meaning (14%) from experiences is viewed as a fundamental aspect of life from a Narrative perspective (Murdock, 2009), as White and Epston (1990, p3) propose "... it is the meaning that [people] attribute to events that determines their behavior." One of the articles in the sample states, *"Meaning is created through the interaction between self and world, writer and reader, observer and observed, as well as psychotherapist and client"* (P56). Another article illustrates one understanding of the process of how meaning informs behaviour: *"It is clear that*

*these boys listen to and accept certain dominant discourses that are disseminated in their communities, create meaning from these discourses, thereby developing their own narratives from the meaning-making process and using these narratives as important resources in deciding how to act and how to justify their actions and behaviours” (P10).*

The interactions which create meaning and the narratives which are created from the meaning-making process are contained in a specific medium – language (4%). This is why language is of central importance to Narrative approaches, “... *language constructs reality and ... in dialogue with people you can co-generate a new reality with new ideas and meanings, because meaning is created in relation with others” (P7).* Through the construction of new ideas and new meanings, clients and therapists together can arrive at a place of possibility (1%) in their journey where new hope (4%) begins to emerge – “*Hope and trust become major therapeutic tools for the postmodern therapist. This hope is not embedded in the therapists’ make-up or knowledge but in the process” (P53).* Another author describes that “suffering holds people in a fixed position of relative hopelessness and, therefore, facilitating freedom from such a position inspires hope” (P36). This is in line with Bird (2002) who describes that fixed positions, which are created through binary language (i.e. either/or) limit and close off possibilities for hope. Helping clients to move between these polar positions and developing language with them to describe the in-between positions brings hope.

In order to language these in-between positions, Narrative approaches rely heavily on the use of ‘metaphor’ (3%). Indeed, language is seen as a metaphor for the lived experiences of people (Bird, 2002). In this way, metaphors can be used in therapy for experiences that people find difficult to language, for example as one article

refers to the inner workings of clocks to explain the roles of different family members (P3), and another describes the process of therapy as a dance (P2). This becomes an important part of the therapy process as Bird (2002) explains that in order for possibilities to be realised, they have to be imagined. These imagined possibilities result in unique (2%) outcomes for the person previous stuck in a problem situation.

**Table 4.4**

*Composition of codes for theme 3*

Theme	Code	Percentage
<i>Theoretical constructs of a Narrative approach</i>	Meaning	14%
	Discourses	10%
	Construction	9%
	Problems	9%
	Power	6%
	Identity	5%
	Position/positioning	5%
	Hope	4%
	Language	4%
	Alternative	4%
	Dominant	4%
	Post-modern	4%
	Action	3%
	Ethics	3%
	Metaphor	3%
	Philosophy	3%
	Respect	3%

Critical	2%
Foucault	2%
Unique	2%
Possibilities	1%

The term discourses (10%) is used in Narrative practise to relate to any dominant or culturally based “truths” which hold influence over people within a particular society (Murdock, 2009); examples of discourses experienced by South Africans are inter alia, racism, classism and sexism. One article explains that “... *a culture’s psychological discourse is a reflection of the dominant underlying philosophies ... from which are derived theories of the person, the social context, and the natural order*” (P49). Another article in the sample explains the authors’ use of this understanding of discourse in the therapy context – “... *our intention is to examine the ways in which an investment in hegemonic discourses serves to regulate this family, and thus determine the ‘damaged and deficient’ narratives which they draw on and present in therapy*” (P45).

These discourses which regulate people and the natural order of the social world are called ‘dominant’ (4%) discourses and serve to ‘position’ (5%) people accordingly, for example by gender, race, education status etc. - “... *traditional concepts of masculinity inherent in sexuality and within the traditional family structures, are still the dominant discourse*” (P9). In the above example, the dominant discourse of patriarchal power positions men as being powerful and women as being powerless. These positions are often intertwined with the psycho-social ‘problems’ (9%) or problem narratives which people become stuck in as their possibilities are limited by dominant discourses which are created in the language they use about themselves

and their lives. This can be seen in the following quote where the dominant discourse of education is highlighted – *“The participants believed that education opens new doors to further opportunities, which positioned them in spaces where nothing was impossible”* (P36); the flip-side of this discourse is that for those without education options there are no further opportunities and no possibilities. This theme of deconstructing dominant discourses echoes the literature review which highlights the narrative approach’s commitment to adopting a critical view of power and discourses.

The term construction (9%), as well as its various derivatives, within the sample generally refers to the paradigm of ‘social-constructionism’ to which Narrative approaches are epistemologically wed (Freedman & Combs, 1996). The social constructionist view holds that the stories, rules and norms (or discourses) that people carry and submit to are embedded within and created by the society in which they live – *“Cultural narratives are not descriptive and passive but are active, constructed and constructive ... and consequently have a dual nature. On the one hand, they are constructed by society and, on the other hand they construct society. They are, therefore, constructed and constructive”* (P27). Thus, this term also refers to the construction, deconstruction and co-construction or re-construction of alternative (4%) narratives formed in language (see discussion above regarding construction and language) within the therapeutic context – *“In the therapeutic relationship, a person enters the relationship with his or her own reality, or story, containing the symptom, and in therapy, this reality is de-constructed and a new reality or story is co-constructed”* (P1); *“... telling a story brings out the prospect of caring for the self suggesting that an alternative story of survival may be possible”* (P38).

The notion of power (6%) is a crucial aspect for Narrative therapists and is based on the writings of French philosopher, Michel Foucault (2%) who purported that there is an inextricable link between power and knowledge and thus introduced the term “power/knowledge”. *“Foucault ... views power as "positive", in the sense of its generating knowledge, constituting action, and creating alternatives. Power and knowledge are inseparable. ...We are all acting within and through a given field of power/knowledge and exercising this power/knowledge over others. Every person and every therapist is also a power broker”* (P4).

Critical (2%) acknowledgment of this position of power is essential for those working from a Narrative perspective and is seen as integral to professional ‘ethics’ (3%). Post-modern therapists are charged with the responsibility of being transparently critical about their position in the therapeutic relationship – *“By taking responsibility for our thought systems, by questioning our presuppositions, and by acknowledging our epistemological positions, we further acknowledge the ethical basis of our therapies”* and *“In such a context, psychotherapists are compelled to engage the field of ethics in a dynamic and personalised manner, so that the psychotherapist ‘is the ethics’”* (P56). This translates to an ‘ethical way of being’ with the person seeking healing in a manner that embodies ‘respect’ (3%) (Kotze, Myburg, Roux and Associates, 2002).

Kotze, et. al. (2002, p5) describe what they term “participatory consciousness” which seeks to move the therapeutic relationship towards a deeper level of understanding by erasing ideas of objectivity and cultivating an attitude that is open and receptive. This sentiment is echoed by one of the sample journal articles – *“As therapists we share many more commonalities in our humanness than differences with our clients,*



*and it is on these commonalities and a mutual respect that we are then able to then explore differences ...” (P2).*

The preceding theme – Theoretical constructs of a Narrative approach - largely consists of instances within the sample where specific theoretical and/or underlying post-modern (4%) philosophy (3%) inherent in a Narrative approach are discussed. The argument may be made that a disproportionate amount of emphasis is placed on regurgitating Narrative ideas as opposed to relating them to the South African context. On the other hand, however, divorcing a Narrative approach from its rich underpinnings of theory and/or philosophy results in a superficial, ‘step-by-step recipe’ style of doing therapy, which was never the intention of this approach. Indeed, Michael White (2007) makes clear in the introduction to his book *Maps of Narrative Practice* that the “maps” he presents are a guide to (or metaphor for) Narrative therapy (not *the* guide or truth of Narrative therapy). He furthermore cautions that when guides to therapeutic practice “... become so taken for granted and accepted ... they are rendered invisible and unavailable to critical reflection”, a scenario he terms “a hazardous development” (White, 2007, p6). Bird (2002, p.ix), warns that “the development of therapeutic models is very dangerous ...” and that “the danger lies in our desire for certainty” which “provides comfort, privilege, belonging and access to a commodity”.

Indeed, the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of Narrative approaches are significant to the South African context as the ideology calls for therapists to be politically and socially relevant in their relationships with clients. However, in order for these theoretical and philosophical discussions to translate tangibly to cultural and socio-political relevance in South Africa, perhaps more attention needs to be given to finding a balance between describing these themes and relating them to the

local context and praxis in future academic literature, specifically in the areas of race, gender, culture and education.

#### **Theme 4 Social phenomena**

This theme refers to instances in the data where the articles make reference to the various social phenomena which are approached from a Narrative perspective. Codes identified within this theme include: violence, race, white, black, gender, women, men, aids, education, cancer, trauma, depression, abuse, disorder, stress, death/loss, illness, and belief.

This theme is comprised of many individual codes, all of which hold value and pertinence in the socio-political and cultural context of South Africa. Due to the large volume of codes, the codes under this theme will be grouped and discussed accordingly.

Table 4.5 illustrates that the largest code in this theme relates to women/female/mother (11%). For the purposes of discussion this code will be grouped with the codes gender/sexuality (5%) and men/male/father (8%); thus, overall, the codes within this theme relating to gender comprise 24% of this theme. During the initial quantitative content analysis these three codes were intentionally looked at separately in order ascertain whether there was gender bias in the sample; the results show that a higher proportion of articles refer to females as opposed to males. This is particularly relevant to the South African cultural and socio-political context as discussions around gender equality and the marginalisation of women is at the forefront of social topics, debates and concerns (see South African Human Rights Commission Equality Report, 2012 retrieved from [http://www.sahrc.org.za/home/21/files/Equality%20Report%2020%20Oct%202012%](http://www.sahrc.org.za/home/21/files/Equality%20Report%2020%20Oct%202012%20)

20Final.pdf). *“One of the effects that the marginalisation of women has had in poor communities is that when it comes to making a contribution, many of these women have been led to believe that they have little if anything to offer that is of value outside of their immediate context”* (P12).

However, some of these references may be viewed as further entrenching gender stereotypes without opening them up to critical reflection such as: *“Research has indicated that there is a higher incidence of depression among women than men, the ratio of women to men being 2:1 ... Women are therefore considered to be at higher risk for developing depression than men ... and in particular, mothers of young children are considered to be an especially vulnerable group”* (P1). Perhaps more women seek mental health care and are thus more frequently given the label of depression than men, rather having an inherent predisposition towards mental illness.

Another article offers a more critical view of gender-related issues discussed in literature: *“Most literature has focussed on how females are the victims of sexual oppression, dominance and abuse, experienced at the hands of their counterparts. Everyone is in agreement that the construction of male sexuality is at fault for these practices, but for unknown reasons these constructions are not effectively addressed to influence change – women are the focus of all interventions, but still they lack the power to successfully negotiate safer sex”* (P9). And yet another by stating: *“The fact is that these harmful norms, related to concepts of masculinity and femininity, are not only increasing the vulnerability of women, but also of men themselves”* (P10). It continues by purporting that: *“... it becomes clear that men play an immense role in oppressing and marginalising women by maintaining various socio-cultural gender-based norms and attitudes, thereby increasing their vulnerability”* (P10).

Many of the references relating to the code 'women' include the codes of abuse (4%) and aids (11%), two socio-cultural phenomena paramount to the South African context. One author argues that *"the constructions of sexuality amidst an era of HIV and AIDS, still prefers the affirmation of male power through sexual acts and notions of male sexuality, but places the blame for the origin of the disease with women"* (P9).

The code violence (5%), is another phenomenon particularly important to the South African context which is often related to gender. According to statistics released by SAPS in 2015 there were over two million crimes committed in South Africa in that year with the majority falling into the "contact crimes" category which include murder, attempted murder, sexual offences, assault and robbery. One author confronts the reality of womanhood in South Africa by stating that: *"sexual and physical violence against women, in South Africa, is very much prevalent ... more than four-in-ten South African men have been found to be physically violent to an intimate partner, and more than a quarter of South African men have raped a woman, which brings the total to one-in-twenty men committing rape in 2009"* (P16).

Aids and abuse, discussed above, can also be categorised under 'illness' (3%) and mental health 'disorder' (3%) as an overarching code. These are important social concerns in the South African context and are inextricably linked to one another. Included in this theme are 'trauma' (9%), 'death/loss' (5%), 'cancer' (4%), 'depression' (4%), and 'stress' (3%). This amounts to 46% of the theme 'Social Phenomena' addressing codes relating to illness and mental health disorder in South Africa. One of the articles caution that *"[i]n the absence of a clear and coherent theoretical framework to guide trauma re-construction, re-tellings of the trauma story could create a risk for retraumatisation of the survivor"* (P48). This is in line with

Johnella Bird's (2002) view of re-traumatisation and her Narrative approach to assisting clients who have experienced traumatic, life-changing events. She proposes engaging with the person as a re-searcher of events of the experience. In this way, the retelling is done in the present and people are encouraged to reflect on their relationship with the experience rather than becoming immersed in it.

The focus that is given to illness and disorder is of particular relevance to the South African social context as a 2014 Sunday Times Investigation found that as many as 1 in 3 South Africans suffer some form of mental illness (Tromp, Dolley, Lagenparsad & Goveneder, 2014). Exposure to high frequencies of crime and abuse were also shown to place many South Africans at risk of experiencing trauma. Furthermore, statistics show that 1 in 4 South Africans are affected by cancer through diagnosis of family, friends, or self (Centre for Disease Control and Prevention cited by CANSA, n.d.).

The final overarching code ubiquitous in South Africa is that of race (4%), this code will be discussed by incorporating the codes of black (3%) and white (7%). As described previously in relation to the gender codes, the codes 'black' and 'white' were intentionally analysed separately in order to investigate possible racial bias in the sample. Although it appears that 'white' appears more than twice as much as 'black' it is important to note that the majority of these articles make reference to Michael White, one of the fore founders of Narrative therapy, thus this percentage may not accurately represent the attention paid to the racial category of 'white'. It is estimated that about 60% of items coded as 'white' refer to the surname White rather than to the racial category. The large and consistent number of references to Michael White's writings may suggest an over-dependence on White's understandings of the Narrative approach and a solidification in Narrative work

around certain figures which have, in a sense, acquired “guru” status amongst Narrative proponents (Doan, 1998).

**Table 4.5**

*Composition of codes for theme 4*

Theme	Code	Percentage
<i>Social phenomena</i>	Women	11%
	Aids	11%
	Trauma	9%
	Men	8%
	Spiritual/beliefs	7%
	White/whiteness	7%
	Violence	5%
	Gender/sexuality	5%
	Education	5%
	Death/loss	5%
	Race	4%
	Cancer	4%
	Depression	4%
	Abuse	4%
	Black	3%
	Disorder	3%
	Stress	3%
	Illness	3%

Analysis reveals that the racial category 'white' is most often used in relation to criticism with regards to 'white supremacy' and the privilege created by the discourse of whiteness. One author reflects on this privilege: *"Whilst I grew up with limitless opportunity because of being a White person, Ms Cupido, who longed to be a nurse, had to serve customers in a butchery. The painful realisation of our connectedness and of the connectedness between poverty and privilege in South Africa, has become the basis of my sense of obligation to do voluntary community work in the Scottsville community ever since"* (P4). Another article exposes the reality of the racialised socio-economic climate of South Africa: *"17 years into the democratic era in South Africa, the 2011 Labour Force Survey showed that 36.7% of Black Africans in South Africa were employed compared to 64.5% of White people. Based on the measure of those seeking jobs, unemployment rates were 28.9% and 5.6%, respectively ... Furthermore, government statistics revealed that only 10% of Black households fall within the top income bracket in South Africa, compared to 65% of White households"* (P50).

The code 'black' is often used when describing various belief systems and cultural paradigms in South Africa, for example: *"Many of the clients presenting for counselling with Western-trained black and white psychotherapists have been African people whose world-views reflect subscription to aspects of traditional African cosmology, despite their simultaneously engagement with Western healing resources"* (P42). Some of these references cause dis-ease as they run the risk of perpetuating stereotypes and racialised assumptions, such as when the same author states that: *"The primary means of communication between the living and the ancestors is through the mechanism of dreams, which therefore take on a particular interpretive significance. Dreams therefore play an important role in the lives of*

*Black people. They are treated like fragments of reality, can give direction to their lives and the instructions or advice contained in the dreams are usually acted on"* (P42). On the other hand, another author critically speaks of her awareness of lacking authority on the subject, saying *"While I cannot and do not wish to speak on behalf of anyone, or expropriate black South African experience, I believe that as an academic in this country at this time, it is necessary to engage with the issue of Africanisation and its implications for psychology"* (P39).

Other articles pay attention to the debate of whether traditional psychological theories are applicable to 'black' South Africans – *"... we have found in our counselling work with black students in particular that the tension to negotiate oneself between collectivist and individualistic perspectives on life may occur within one individual. Black students sometimes find themselves torn between two worlds"* (P49).

The three codes broadly discussed under this theme have been those of gender, illness and race, three powerful discourses present in present day South Africa. The question begs, does this theme translate to socio-political and/or cultural relevance? Based on my readings of the articles in the sample I would venture to say that oftentimes discussions around these issues appear superficial and that in order to engage in these discussions effectively, critical reflection is essential. That being said, the importance of the fact that these discussions are indeed taking place should not be overshadowed – *"one thing about racism is that it will not vanish simply because some people insist that in a rainbow nation it does not exist"* (Schutte, 2013, para. 5). Furthermore, some of the articles in the sample date back to 1996, when South Africa was in its democratic infancy and the shoes of racial discussion were still being worn in.



An analysis of the articles selected for this study indicates that authors writing about Narrative approaches to psycho-social interventions within the context of South Africa consistently pay attention to relevant social phenomena, most particularly to gender, illness and race discussions. This finding suggests that Narrative approaches offer an approach to psycho-social interventions that holds social and political relevance within the South African context as opposed to the more traditional approaches criticised in the literature review.

In conclusion of this section, the preceding discussion has focused on the most frequent themes that occurred in the data set of 58 journal articles. These included the themes of: listening to the telling of stories, viewing people in context, theoretical constructs of a narrative approach, and social phenomena. When these themes are viewed against the cultural and socio-political relevance debate backdrop highlighted in the literature review which is pertinent in current South African psychological literature, they contain important implications.

Indeed, these themes suggest that Narrative approaches to psycho-social interventions, as they are currently being used in South Africa, address many of the criticisms lobbied against the profession of psychology in general. The journal articles show consistent cultural, racial, gender, social and political awareness and sensitivity which is crucial in the current day climate of post-Apartheid South Africa.

#### 4.3.2 Linking the themes

Attention will now be paid to finding ways in which the identified and discussed themes relate or one another in response to the second qualitative question. The identified themes are: viewing people in context, listening to the telling of stories, theoretical constructs of a Narrative approach, and social phenomena.

Starting with the first theme of viewing people in context, the idea was put forward that Narrative approaches hold a staunch anti-individualist stance; this stance is rooted in the underlying epistemology of social-constructionism which formed part of the discussion under theme 3 above. Social-constructionism involves the viewing of individuals' realities as being constructed through their interactions with society, as well as creating awareness about how these realities affect the meaning individuals' give to their experiences (Freedman & Combs, 1996). This perspective places emphasis on the social context within which individuals function and how the social context influences the way problems are experienced and viewed (Becvar and Becvar, 2009). Moreover, this theme connects to the second theme of listening to the telling of stories.

This link is borne through deconstruction and the role of language which is a central aspect of post-modernism (coded in theme 3) and thus pertinent to Narrative therapy (Becvar and Becvar, 2009). Deconstruction (briefly mentioned in theme 3) involves an abstracted understanding of how language is both used to understand the world and construct our understanding of it. Language, however, is closely tied to culture and is a socially constructed phenomenon – “Thus, our words express the conventions, the symbols, the metaphors of our particular group. And we cannot speak in a language separate from that of our community” (Becvar and Becvar, 2009, p91). This understanding of language as a means of constructing realities is credited to the work of Wittgenstein and can be related to the self definitions or stories people adopt through conversations with themselves and others; “[i]n this sense the language we use makes us who we are in the moment we use it” (Anderson 1992, p64).

The influence that the social context has over the stories and meanings people tell and have occurs in the form of power relations and discourses that serve to limit the views people hold of themselves, their capabilities and potentialities. Discourses and their influences are often invisible to us and thus need to be intentionally deconstructed (Raheim, Carey, Waldegrave, Tamasese, Tuhaka, Fox, Franklin, White and Denborough, n.d.). As Bird (2002, p37) states “when ideas and practices that oppress people (clients) remain unexposed then our silence is a compliance with these ideas and practices.” This relates to the final theme named social phenomena under which attention was given to race, gender, violence, abuse and illness – powerful discourses operating both overtly and covertly in South African culture

The above discussion has provided one story of how the identified themes are related to one another. There may be many other possible interpretations of how the themes link, mostly due to the intertwined and interconnected nature of the post-modern, social constructivist underpinnings of a Narrative approach.

#### 4.3.3 Critical reflection

What follows is an honest and reflexive personal account of my reaction as a reader to the articles comprising the research sample in response to the third qualitative question – “How do I as the reader/researcher respond to the way Narrative practices are represented in the texts?”

As the reader/researcher I am not neutral. I am white; I have benefited from the white privilege bestowed on me by of the colour of my skin. I am a woman; I have grown up experiencing, mostly subtle, patriarchal practices and have been covertly subjugated even though I have not always understood what this meant. I am a

student psychologist; I have revelled in the authority that the statement “I’m busy completing my Master’s in Psychology” has given me. Being a student I have been exposed to teachings and ideologies that position me to hold power/knowledge which has both humbled me and at times made me self-righteous. I am English; this has given me an advantage in understanding and interpreting the language of the texts through which the knowledge has been imparted. I am much more than this, but it is with all of these de-neutralising characteristics that I engage with the articles making up my sample.

As I immersed myself in the reading of the sample articles I found my reactions to be conflicting and confusing. At times I thought that there was too much theoretical discussion, I noted a spewing of the same re-hashed information which left me frustrated. In these instances, much attention was given to in-depth explaining and describing concepts such as Social-constructionism and Discourse (P55), or Foucault’s power/knowledge and Narrative therapy (P 45). It is notable, however, that many of these articles were written in the earlier years of the prescribed time period (pre 2000), when Narrative ideas were still gaining ground in South Africa. Other times, I found that articles which placed emphasis on “techniques” without being grounded in the underlying philosophy came across as superficial in terms of my own understanding of Narrative practice. For example, when authors applied Narrative ideas as “add-on” techniques such as in one article which offers an eclectic treatment programme for children who experience Bi-polar mood disorder – *“Techniques from narrative therapy are used in this process, in which the child is asked to find a story in the pattern of moods and give each mood an externalisable character which the child can think of as a way of externalising the mood state. In the process of affect regulation, both child and parent can work out ways of narrating the*

*unwanted mood state*" (P43). This may suggest that Narrative approaches are becoming more accepted in the mental health field as having legitimacy and are therefore transforming from being an alternative to a more secular approach. Perhaps, though, what I was looking for was more of a middle ground, where the philosophical and theoretical understandings are explained in terms of their application to the South African cultural and socio-political context.

On the other hand, however, there were occasions within articles making contextual arguments which left a bitter taste in my mouth. Occasions where the author in attempting to make reference to, for example, race, cultural or gender relevance drew on damaging stereotyping without applying critical reflection. One such article states: "*... Zulus do not work through the death of a loved one emotionally, but instead involve themselves in the funeral rituals surrounding the actual burial. The purpose of this ritualistic behaviour is to protect people from becoming too emotional and so the Zulus divert the focus... from the unpleasant experience to a complexity of ritual behaviour*" (P15). While it may be true that burial rituals are important to the Zulu culture, it is damaging and presumptuous to assume that this excludes all Zulu people from the emotional consequences of loss.

These kinds of reactions left me pondering the fine line between cultural sensitivity and a kind of "pseudo-sensitivity" based on blindly adopted assumptions about the race/gender/language/culture of the client attending therapy. For now my personal remedy, as I am on the brink of entering the therapy room, is summed up by one of the articles within the sample which argues that "*the equal problematisation or consideration of the role of culture in every appropriate case discussion would go a*

*considerable way towards creating a more open and balanced forum for the discussion of cultural issues” (P39).* Thus, each interaction with each client, regardless of race, class, culture, gender, ethnicity, age etc. will be regarded as a cross cultural one that I approach with curiosity. This reminds me of Johnella Bird’s (2002) concept of the “relational I” – that as I engage with each client, I meet with each of them in unique ways and that each time I meet with a person, the relationship will be different.

Finally, my study of these articles has compelled me to contemplate the argument for an indigenous psychology outlined in chapter 2. Because psychological approaches currently stand accused of being inadequate to accommodate South Africa’s unique and complex cultural and socio-historical situation, it is important for South African psychologists to remain critical and responsive to the local context (Long, 2013). One way of dealing with these accusations is to introduce a uniquely South African psychology; however, in order for such an approach to come into effect, considerable grounded-theory research is required (Nyowe, 2015). According to the results of this study, a Narrative approach potentially lends itself well to alleviating some of the concerns espoused by the relevance debate, specifically those relating to cultural and socio-political relevance (Long, 2013). It is thus suggested that future research into this topic considers the possibility of a Narrative approach specifically adapted to South Africa’s cultural and socio-political needs.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

This chapter was broken into two main sections of analysis and discussion. The first section reports on the quantitative results in response to the questions – “In what areas of psychological praxis is a Narrative approach most frequently used?” and

“What are the most frequent themes found in literature regarding Narrative therapy in South Africa?” There were four major themes identified in the qualitative analysis thrust, namely viewing people in context, listening to the telling of stories, theoretical constructs of a narrative approach and social phenomena.

The second section reflects a qualitative interpretation of the quantitative data in order to answer the questions – “How do the identified themes relate to the South African context and, does this translate to cultural and/or socio-political relevance?; “How are the identified themes related to one another?” and “How do I as the reader/researcher respond to the way Narrative practices are represented in the texts?” In this section selected codes in each theme were discussed and examples from the individual articles were given in order to establish whether there was a link to cultural and/or socio-political relevance. These themes revealed that the practice of Narrative approaches to psycho-social interventions in South Africa offer an alternative approach to therapy from traditional approaches that largely responds to the concerns and criticisms about the profession of psychology in general. Following from the discussion of the themes, an illustration of how the themes relate to one another was given. Finally a critical reflection from the reader/researcher was offered which included discussions on cultural sensitivity and a proposed departure for further inquiry into a South African Narrative approach to therapy.

In the proceeding chapter recommendations will be given based on the results and discussions contained in the current chapter and this study will be drawn to conclusion.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This conclusion chapter will aim to summarise and explicate the current study, the main methods used for this research will be identified, and implications and recommendations will be discussed.

Currently there is much discontentment regarding the social, cultural and political relevance of psychology for the majority of South Africans as well as the national context. This discontentment has deep historical roots which tie the profession of psychology in South Africa to the country's apartheid legacy (Barnes & Cooper, 2016; Gylseth, 2008; Louw & van Hoorn, 1997). Although, at times, the charge lobbied against psychologists appears to be complacency through silence, more sinister accusations of using psychological testing and professional bodies to promote the interests of a racist government are laid (Louw and van Hoorn, 1997; Long & Foster, 2013). As a result of the governmental policies regarding black South Africans, black psychologists were severely underrepresented in the country and received sub-par opportunities for post-graduate training (Manganyi, 2013).

As the country was ushered into democracy in the early 1990's, the profession of psychology began to search for a new identity. However, the current state of the profession reflects that this has not yet been achieved. Psychology remains largely under-representative of the country's demographics, and underused and inaccessible to the majority of South Africans (Louw & Machemedze, 2015; Ruane, 2010). Adding to this, the profession's general over-reliance on Western theories has



culminated in psychology being identified as culturally, socially and politically irrelevant to the local context (Long, 2013). As a response, there have been calls for an indigenous, African psychology (Edwards, 2016), as well as attempts within the counselling and community sub-disciplines of psychology to address some of these concerns regarding relevance (Young, et. al., 2016; Seedat & Lazarus, 2011).

Narrative approaches to psycho-social interventions appear to offer a possible good-fit to the South African context. This is based on the underlying philosophical and theoretical underpinnings informing the practice. Narrative approaches present an alternative to mainstream psychology that places emphasis on political justice and social discourses and espouses a social constructionist orientation (Combs and Freedman, 2012). Moreover, this approach has been shown to be used successfully in similar contexts to South Africa, such as Kenya, Australia, Uganda, Nigeria and Srebrenica

This project has adopted a social constructionist and post-modern perspective in examining the use and relevance of Narrative approaches to psycho-social interventions in the South African context. Academic literature in the form of journal articles were chosen as representative of the views of South African psychologists and counsellors using Narrative approaches. Therefore, a mixed methods content analysis was selected as the most appropriate tool for analysing the data.

The methodology chapter then described the process that was followed in order to achieve the overarching objective of the research – to explicate the relevance and use of Narrative approaches to psycho-social interventions in the post-Apartheid South African context. The research was conducted from a post-modern, social constructionist paradigm and a sequential-explanatory Mixed Methods research

design using both quantitative and qualitative content analysis was employed in order to study 58 journal articles which were published by South African authors and covered the topic of Narrative approaches to therapy. This content analysis has been an attempt to investigate how Narrative approaches to psycho-social interventions are used in South Africa and whether this translates to relevance. The analysis was guided by the questions outlined in the following section.

## 5.2 Main thrusts and research questions

A mixed-methods content analysis conducted from a social-constructionist framework was conducted in order to investigate the use and relevance of Narrative approaches to psycho-social interventions in the South African context. Accordingly, the research has defined two main areas of focus. These are the particular areas of psycho-social intervention in which Narrative approaches are most commonly used in South Africa, including the way they are used and the phenomenon they frequently address; as well as an investigation into the connection this use has with the context, ultimately translating to relevance.

Each journal article was analysed according to the following questions:

- What are the most frequent themes found in literature regarding Narrative approaches in South Africa?
- What areas of praxis are Narrative approaches to psycho-social interventions most frequently used in?
- How do the identified themes relate to the South African context and how does this translate to cultural and/or socio-political relevance?
- How are the themes identified in the articles related to one another?

- How do I as the reader/researcher respond to the way Narrative approaches are represented in the texts?

A summary of the analysis of the questions, as applied to the use and relevance of Narrative approaches to psycho-social interventions in South Africa is presented below.

### 5.3 Summary of main arguments and how they relate to the literature

#### 5.3.1 The use of Narrative approaches in the South African context

The starting point for this exploration into journal articles about Narrative approaches to psycho-social interventions in South Africa is that they appeared to offer an alternative to the mainstream approaches currently under contention in the country. It is therefore important for the focus to be on the specific areas of praxis in which Narrative approaches are being used, as well as the social phenomena which they are being used to address.

The findings of this study have shown that, according to the sample articles, Narrative approaches in South Africa are most frequently used in the areas of family therapy, career counselling, community psychology and pastoral counselling or theology. Furthermore, recurring social phenomena which are given frequent attention within South African Narrative practice literature include: gender, race, violence, abuse and illness. Along with the theme of social phenomena, the themes of viewing people in context, listening to the telling of stories and theoretical constructs of a Narrative approach were identified.

According to the literature review, mental health care in South Africa is largely underused and inaccessible to the majority of the nation (Ruane, 2010). The areas of

praxis identified by this study are thus significant, particularly in the case of community psychology and pastoral counselling. Both of these areas of psycho-social intervention involve grass-roots participation and open possibilities for more people to access mental health care (Painter et. al., 2013). Furthermore, the social phenomena identified as being frequently addressed by the sample articles crucially relate to the cultural and socio-political context of South Africa. The remaining three themes – viewing people in context, listening to the telling of stories and theoretical constructs of a Narrative approach, are pertinent to both the South African context, as well as the global Narrative terrain in that they place emphasis on post-modern, social constructionist ideas as well as social justice and dismantling dominant discourses (Combs & Freedman, 2012).

### 5.3.2 The relevance of Narrative approaches to the South African context

In journal articles written about Narrative approaches to psycho-social interventions in South Africa, the frequently occurring themes identified by this study suggest that the practice is relevant to the cultural and socio-political context of the country.

The theme of ‘viewing people in context’ is in line with the Narrative approach’s commitment to being an anti-individualist approach which places emphasis on relationships, community, family and history (Madigan, 2012). At an epistemological level, Narrative approaches to psycho-social intervention encourage psychologists and counsellors to engage with each client as if it were a cross-cultural encounter in order to avoid assumptions and the danger of drawing conclusions about people based on them. The commitment to this theme in the sample journal articles suggests cultural competence and sensitivity amongst practitioners following this approach and ultimately relates to cultural relevance.

The second theme of 'listening to the telling of their stories' also relates to the cry for cultural relevance, particularly in terms of opposing Westernised beliefs and pathologies on non-Western people. As the psychologist or counsellor listens to the stories, words and descriptions that the person has about their life or problem, there is an air of genuine curiosity and interest rather than a call to analyse or interpret the client's life according to foreign psychological models and theories.

For the third theme – 'theoretical constructs of a Narrative approach', the analysis reveals that much attention is given to the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings of the Narrative approach in the sample journal articles. The argument was made, however, that in order for this theme to better translate to relevance in South Africa, greater attention should be paid to contextualising the underpinnings according to the South African socio-cultural environment. While it is acknowledged and fully supported by this research that solid grounding in the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings are of necessity for the Narrative approach to be used in an authentic and effective manner, this research calls for clear links to be made between these underpinnings and the local context.

The final theme identified in this report relates to the social phenomena that Narrative approaches have been identified as addressing in the sample journal articles. As was shown in the literature review, a core component of Narrative approaches involves confronting issues of justice and socio-political realities, and the sample for this study shows that this commitment is echoed by South African proponents of Narrative approaches. The main social phenomena uncovered by the analysis are gender – including issues related to gender power relations, patriarchy and violence and abuse; race – including issues of 'whiteness' and white privilege as well as therapists' awareness of race within the therapeutic relationship; and illness –

including mental disorders and physiological diseases. These social phenomena have particular and pertinent relevance to the South African socio-political context and thus show that Narrative approaches are being used to address relevant topics during psycho-social interventions.

#### 5.4 Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the discoveries of the current study which suggests that a Narrative approach to psycho-social interventions offers an approach that has the potential to address South Africa's unique cultural and socio-political context and psycho-social needs.

In order for this potential to be brought to the fore, it is recommended that future academic literature regarding the use of Narrative approaches to therapy in South Africa pays closer attention to the specific ways in which the theoretical underpinnings from which the authors work are practically related to the context in which they are applied.

Indeed, in practically relating the theoretical underpinnings to the South African context, psychologists and counsellors may be positioned to begin re-imagining a uniquely South African approach to therapy which draws on the philosophical and theoretical understandings that inform the Narrative approaches. In order for this to be possible, South African psychologists would be encouraged to collaborate with the other Social Sciences such as social anthropologists and social workers as well as to rely on the expertise of local community members and cultural leaders as they engage with the necessary grounded-theory research process.

Due to the importance of having a rich philosophical understanding as the foundation for a Narrative approach, it is recommended that undergraduate psychology studies include prescribed courses in post-modern and critical philosophy as well as local cultural studies.

## 5.5 Conclusion

The analysis of journal articles related to Narrative approaches to psycho-social interventions in South Africa, in this project, has served to highlight that Narrative approaches are largely used in effective and relevant ways in the South African context. This relevance is particularly related to the areas of psycho-social intervention in which Narrative approaches are frequently used, the social phenomena which the approach is recurrently used to address, and the core theoretical constructs which include post-modern, anti-individualist, social constructionist views. These views further translate to recurring emphasis placed on viewing people in the context of their situation, environment, relationships and systems (be they cultural, community, family, or belief systems).

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## APPENDIX 1:

### JOURNAL ARTICALS

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