

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

**The affective resonance of personal narratives:
Creating a deeper experience of identity, empathy
and historical understanding**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of

Masters of Arts in Museum Studies

Massey University, Palmerston North, Aotearoa, New Zealand.

Zoë Gabrielle Roland

2017

Abstract

As the world plunges into the depths of a modern state of ‘anti-tradition’ (Trueman, 1998), there is a pervasive fear of a future void of empathy (Manney, 2008). The latter, believed to be partially propagated by a decline in exposure to diverse narratives, can be ameliorated through the identification and dissemination of genres which generate affect and humility (Berlant, 2008).

The key question this thesis aims to address is; how do personal narratives create affective resonance which encourages the propagation of advantageous outcomes. I argue that personal narratives have the capacity to generate strong affective resonance within their recipients and tellers. Affective resonance, born from universality which create ‘intimate publics spheres’ (Berlant, 2008), has a potent ability for self-reflection and identity growth (Abrams, 2010, Sklar, 2009), empathic responses and action (Gallese & Wojciewowski, 2011; Fiske, 2008), and for developing rich multi-dimensional landscapes of historical understanding (Kosyaeva, Rowe and Wertsch, 2002).

The research is based, firstly, on a broad transdisciplinary theoretical framework which comprises literature from diverse disciplines: oral history (Thompson, 2009), literary theory (Weinstein, 2007), philosophy (Benjamin, 1936; de Certeau, 1984) and neuroscience (Gallese & Wojciewowski, 2011). Secondly, *Heritage New Zealand’s* storytelling website *High Street Stories* provides the case study through which to investigate participant responses of affect, self-reflection and historical understanding. Through synthesis and analysis of the framework, in conjunction with the case study, a rich expository illustration of personal narratives and their cache of positive outcomes is presented.

This dissertation is located in Museum Studies opening a space for the consideration of this multi-disciplinary literature and its connection to affect theory. Furthermore, as a crucial tool for museological practice, personal narratives, through their ‘germinative powers’ (Benjamin, 1936), have the propensity to impart a holistic, multi-dimensional understanding of history, rendering ordinary people as agents and subjects.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following people for their assistance in making the writing of this thesis possible:

The four participants who gave their time and shared their personal stories, so that I could gain a greater insight into first person storytelling and affect.

The *High Street Stories* website and augmented reality application storytellers for their time and sharing their personal recollections and thoughts.

Heritage New Zealand for allowing me to produce *High Street Stories*.

My husband Alastair, and children Rosa and Jozsef Crawford for accompanying me on many museum visits across Europe and discussing their experiences with me.

Alastair Crawford for his support and proofreading.

Nick Haig for his proofreading.

Susan Abasa for her support of my work, both academic and professional, over the last decade. Thank you also for the personal support you have given me.

Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents	vii
List of Illustrations	xiii
Definitions	xv
Preamble: Vignette One	xvii
Chapter One - Introduction	1
Introduction	1
Research objectives	1
Background to the study	2
Scope of the study	2
Key themes of the study and theoretical framework	4
<i>History and the place of personal narrative</i>	5
<i>Personal narrative, self and identity</i>	6
<i>Narrative empathy</i>	6
<i>Inclusivity and prosocial behaviour</i>	7
Preview of chapters	8
Methodology	10
The research aims and objectives	10
Case Study (High Street Stories)	11
Research ethics	12
Literature Review	14
Current Literature - Gaps and Convergences	14
Key themes emerging from the literature	15
<i>History and the place of personal narrative</i>	15

<i>Personal narrative, self and identity</i>	16
<i>Narrative empathy</i>	16
Summary	18
PART ONE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	21
Chapter Two - History and the place of personal narrative	23
Introduction	23
A brief history of personal narratives	24
The power structures of historical narratives	27
Political agendas and personal narratives	29
‘Anti-tradition’, marginality and oral history	30
The creation of an ‘intimate public sphere’	32
The historical value of the subjectivity and intersubjectivity of personal narratives	34
Personal narratives and official histories within cultural institutions	36
Summary	37
Chapter Three - Personal narrative, self and identity	39
Introduction	39
The necessity of a chronological life narrative	40
Anti-tradition and the narrated self	42
Literary fiction, autobiography and affect	43
Listening to the stories of others	45
Protagonist status and subjectivity	47
Learning from the stories, mistakes and the <i>counterfactual thinking</i> of others	47
Summary	49

Chapter Four - Narrative Empathy	51
Introduction	51
Information versus narrative	52
The role of personal characteristics in empathic responses to literary fiction	53
The role of literary fiction in the development of real world understanding	55
The affective qualities of first person dialogue	57
Personal narrative as generator of humility and pro-social behaviour	57
‘Neurohumanism’ - The science of narrative empathy	61
Mirror Neurons - ‘The Gandhi Neurons’	62
‘Embodied Simulation’ - the embodiment of narrative affect	62
‘Feeling of Body’ phenomena	63
‘Liberated Embodied Simulation’	64
Summary	64
PART TWO: HIGH STREET STORIES CASE STUDY	69
Chapter Five - Case Study - <i>High Street Stories</i>	71
Introduction	71
Project Context - The Canterbury Earthquakes and the High Street Precinct	71
<i>My role in the production of High Street Stories</i>	73
<i>The Project: High Street Stories (www.highstreetstories.co.nz)</i>	74
<i>The importance of High Street Stories as a digital heritage tool</i>	76
<i>Historical understanding - the vernacular vs. the ‘official’</i>	77
<i>Loss - the impetus for storytelling</i>	78
<i>Collective Identity and universality</i>	81
The current research - Research design and Methodology	82
<i>Participant Profiles (High Street Stories)</i>	82

<i>Potential bias</i>	84
<i>The interview questionnaire</i>	85
<i>Limitations</i>	85
Summary	86
Chapter Six - Discussion and Analysis	87
Introduction	87
The Theoretical Framework	88
<i>'Anti-tradition' and making humans the agents and subjects of history</i>	88
<i>Narrative empathy</i>	90
<i>Inclusivity and pro-social behaviour</i>	92
Case Study - <i>High Street Stories</i>	92
The Theoretical Framework and the Case Study – convergences and divergences	93
<i>'Anti-Tradition', loss and narrative</i>	94
<i>Vernacular and historical narratives</i>	96
<i>The self and the collective</i>	100
<i>Counterfactual narrative</i>	104
<i>Narrative appropriation</i>	106
<i>The 'intimate public sphere' and 'fictive kinship'</i>	108
<i>Narrative empathy - 'standing in the shoes of others'</i>	109
<i>Personal characteristics and narrative empathy</i>	111
Further study	113
Summary	114
Chapter Seven – Conclusion	117
Afterword: Vignette Two	123

Reference List 125

Appendices 135

List of Illustrations

- Fig 1.** 141-149 Manchester Street, Christchurch, 2011.
Photo: Becker Fraser Photos 72
- Fig 2.** High Street precinct laneways post demolition, Christchurch 2013.
Photo: Becker Fraser Photos 73
- Fig 3.** The author using the *High Street Stories* augmented reality app in lower High Street, Christchurch, 2013. Credit: Heritage New Zealand.
Photo: Guy Frederick 75
- Fig 4.** The *High Street Stories* augmented reality app. Showing High Street from Tuam Street, Christchurch, 2013. Photo: Heritage New Zealand.
Photo: Guy Frederick 76
- Fig 5.** Text from *High Street Stories*, *We did a lot of odd Repairs*.
Tony Kennett. Interview. <http://www.highstreetstories.co.nz/stories/76-we-did-do-a-lot-of-odd-repairs-%E2%80%A6> 78
- Fig 6.** Screenshot from *High Street Stories* showing the diversity and use of High Street images - from illustrations to old photographs of business owners (left hand side image).
Photo: Zoe Roland. <http://www.highstreetstories.co.nz/> 79
- Fig 7.** Nick Paris at Alice in Videoland. Image from *High Street Stories*.
Photo: Zoe Roland. <http://www.highstreetstories.co.nz/> 80

Definitions

Terms appearing throughout the thesis which benefit from definition are as follows:

Affective resonance

The state of affective resonance refers to the processes of social interactions, ‘whose progression is dynamically shaped in an entanglement of moving, and being-moved, affecting and being-affected’ (Mühlhoff, 2014, p. 1001).

Empathy

Manney (2008, citing Webster’s 1979 Dictionary) writes that empathy is ‘the projection of one’s own personality into the personality of another in order to understand him better’ (para 4).

Narrative

According to oral history theorist Lynn Abrams (2010), narrative is an ‘ordered account created out of disordered material’, providing the means to communication, experience, knowledge and emotion (p. 176).

Oral history

Paul Thompson (2009) writes that oral history is a method which can be used by many scholars, however, he says it is difficult ‘to mark any clear boundary around the work of a movement which brings together so many specialists’ (p. 82). Within this thesis I have used the term ‘oral history’ when paraphrasing where it has been used by the original author or in relation to the wider practice of recording or disseminating unedited life story interviews.

Official history

Appropriated from the article, *Linking Little Narratives to Big Ones: Narrative and Public Memory in History Museums*. By Kosyaeva, T. Y., Rowe, S.M. and Wertsch, J.V. (2002), the terms ‘official’ and ‘vernacular’ are used to demarcate historical texts and information formulated and produced by sanctioned published Historians, to

vernacular narratives which are locally focused and contain social and historical first person person accounts.

Personal narratives

The term ‘personal narratives’, as used within this thesis, pertains to all first person narratives. I also use the term ‘vernacular narrative’ interchangeably. These ‘aestheticised’ recorded personal narratives, curated or edited, for the purpose of cultural interpretation are differentiated from the raw unedited interviews or text, which I will term ‘oral histories’.

Self

For the purpose of this thesis I will define ‘self’ through oral history theorist Lynn Abram’s (2009) definition. She writes that the self is usually seen as ‘mediated between cultural discourses and material experience’, and ‘constructed by culture’ providing a ‘unique identity, distinguishable from others’ (p. 177).

Socio-historical narrative

A narrative, either vernacular or official in nature, which deals with or extrapolates on the social realities of lived history.

Preamble

Vignette One

*Affect and learning ‘tactics for future use’ through family parables
(de Certeau, 1984)*

As my children have no grandparents, or other active relatives providing a sense of generational stability, the personal and historical narratives my husband and I share with them act in lieu of those which significant others may have imparted. They provide a sense of past, present and future. I find compelling the notion that through family storytelling, an individual can be imbued with ‘a strong sense of a much longer personal lifespan, which will sometimes survive their own death’ (Thompson, 2009, p. 2). I find it interesting in that, through telling family stories we not only develop, bolster and protect our identity through the integration of family stories, but we also have the opportunity to use imparted knowledge from these stories of our ancestors as ‘tactics for future use’, to enhance our lives, the generations to come and future decision-making (de Certeau, 1984).

My grandparents fought in the Hungarian Resistance. They hid their Jewish friends in their attic, whilst plotting to undermine the work of the Nazis. In 1946, after refusing to live under a Communist dictatorship they escaped across the Austrian border under supplies being transported by a Jewish friend. They were shot at but given refuge by the Austrian boarderguards. After a number of years in camps around Central Europe they finally settled in Australia under a refugee programme.

This story, worlds away from my own childrens’ comfortable middle-class lives, provides them with understanding, empathy and tools for future use. Firstly, they understand the immense bravery of their great-grandparents; my grandmother pregnant with two small children, their desperation to live free from the oppression of a totalitarian regime, desperation so great that to be killed while escaping was no worse than to be sent back to live under an ‘unacceptable’ rule of Communism (J. S. Roland personal communication, December, 1989). Secondly, the story broadens their experience of the world and its people - they now know when they hear about ‘those refugees’, those nameless, faceless dehumanised refugees, when people refer to the

millions of Syrians flooding Europe, that they are in fact ‘just like us’ and their predicament is not self-inflicted nor is it to be ignored. Thirdly, and possibly most importantly, this story illustrates to my children the power that individuals have to create change. These stories are not only about passing on family history, they are a tool to encourage collective strength through affect, and to instil in the next generation the pride and self-determination of their ancestors. This ‘tactics for future use’ coupled with their disdain of prejudice creates a transformative potential.

During the same war, on the other side of the European continent, my father-in-law also experienced the Second World War. He once told me the story of his mother and her twin sister running with him to the air raid shelters in London during the Blitz. What he recalls most vividly whilst running through the streets with his mother and aunt, was not their distress and alarm or the bombs or the fear, but the fact that they concocted games to lessen his fear. Listening to this story it is difficult not to feel emotional, not solely because it is emotionally wrenching for my father-in-law Robert to recount but because of the bravery and selflessness of putting one’s own fears aside to protect another human being. The depth of his appreciation to them is evident in his emotion when he tells the story, consequently creating a strong affective resonance in those listening to the story.

The universality of this story is manifold: compassionate trickery, motherhood, sisterhood, fear, the veil of childhood innocence, survival and of the pleasures and protection of childhood naivety. This story resonated with me the first time I heard it. However, later it became the story I drew upon when, during the many violent earthquakes in Christchurch, I had to put my own fears aside to preserve a sense of calm and normality for my two young children; I played games with them and soothed them during the earthquakes and as we held onto the legs of the table I laughed and told them that the earth must be cross but once it has shaken off its anger it will feel better. Robert’s story had given me an historical picture of London during the Second World War, and he had passed on to future generations a profound and affecting moment from his childhood, yet most importantly, his story instills in listeners a value, a practical tool of self-preservation and protection for the future to add to one’s ‘repertory of tactics for future use’ (de Certeau, 1984). In relation to this, Shuman (2005) writes that by choosing not to subvert ‘oppressive situations’, ‘appropriation

can use one person's tragedy to serve as another person's inspiration and preserve' (p. 5).

Together these stories work to provide strength in times of difficulty. Although the two stories come from opposing sides of the European continent and their tellers spoke different languages, were of different religious denominations and from very different socio-economic backgrounds, their stories unite them in our minds as our brave and determined ancestors. They are both stories which present the universal experiences of war, childhood, protection, fear and parenthood and are stories which I am proud to tell my children, and which they will carry with them in times of difficulty, and when confronted with difference and prejudice. They are personal narratives which provide examples of universality, historical understanding, identity and deep affective resonance, whereby the characters, our family, have become luminous heroes, providing a deeper meaning to our existence; connecting past, present and future.

Chapter One

Introduction

Throughout history personal narratives have been a vehicle for conveying the events of the collective past and present from one generation to the next. As a medium full of potential universality, telling our own stories and listening to those of others has a potent ability for conveying far more than historical narratives. Vernacular narratives have the capacity for generating self-awareness and reflection, expanding our sphere of historical understanding and propagating affective resonance. One of the great promises of this genre is the ability to transcend the personal, creating connectivity and understanding between diverse people and communities (Shuman, 2005).

Research objectives

This thesis will investigate three distinct strands of inquiry generated by personal narratives as a community, academic and aesthetic discipline. The key research questions I will address are:

1. *How and why do personal narratives create i) a sense of self and collective identity, ii) empathy and iii) a depth of historical understanding?*
2. *How do these factors work together to create affective resonance within orators and listeners?*

The research will illustrate how ‘small world stories’ (Berlant, 2008; Shuman, 2005) enable affective resonance to occur as a by-product of self-reflection, empathy and reassessing our sense of historical agency. The thesis argues that personal narratives have a unique position, through their universality, the creation of ‘intimate public spheres’ (Berlant, 2008), self-reflection and our renewed sense of agency within history and have the propensity for affective resonance.

Background to the study

My interest in the thesis topic is long-standing. My academic background covers anthropology, theatre and documentary film. Professionally I have worked as a documentary film and radio maker and oral historian. For the past seven years I have worked as a developer of public programmes for Heritage New Zealand. It has always been my belief that storytelling and personal narratives play an important role within the realm of museums and cultural institutions. In my professional life I have witnessed the capacity personal narratives possess for heightening historical engagement and reflection, and their ability to conflate the past, present and potential future.

As personal narratives have been an integral part of my working life, the rationale for undertaking this research was to investigate the emotional response these intimate vernacular recollections and remembrances have on their listeners and readers.

Scope of the study

The thesis is divided into two main parts; part one focuses on the theoretical framework and the second part on a case study of the storytelling website *High Street Stories*. The two parts create a dialogue between the academic theory of personal narratives and research participants' experiences of *High Street Stories*.

Oral histories and first person narratives have been associated with museums' exhibitionary and research practices in New Zealand and elsewhere for decades (see, for example, Cameron, 1995; Darian-Smith, 2008; Green, 1997). In 2014, while employed by Heritage New Zealand, I conceived and produced *High Street Stories*, as a multi-media museological project. *High Street Stories* was developed in the aftermath of the 2010-2011 Canterbury earthquakes that irrevocably damaged the High Street precinct located in central Christchurch. The collection of personal narratives captures the lives, viewpoints and remembrances of place. Despite such projects, theorising the impact of personal narratives on audiences is still in its infancy.

This thesis draws on a wider literature thus far under-utilised within the discipline of museum studies. It also tentatively suggests that theorising the affects of personal narratives is overdue within the discipline. However, it is not my intention to suggest

how theoretical understanding will advance museum practice: that is beyond the scope of the current project.

The aim of the thesis is to explore and reinforce the benefits of using personal narratives in order to enhance the capacity and emotional reach of cultural and historical interpretation. This study contributes to a small body of literature on the topic of public perceptions and responses to personal narratives and to emerging literature on affect within museological practice, oral history and wider narratological studies. As an addition to the slowly growing branch of *neurohumanism* and to contemporary museum studies, this research will benefit cultural institutions when thinking about the dissemination of personal narratives within their exhibitions and off site programming.

A case for the use of personal narratives within cultural institutions will be explored implicitly rather than through an exhaustive discussion and analysis of personal narratives within wider contemporary cultural practice. The intention of this study is to broadly examine personal narratives' role and efficacy in the production of affective resonance. The many qualities of vernacular narratives can be utilised by cultural institutions to enhance audience experiences, understanding and empathic connections between individuals and communities.

Pioneering oral history theorist Paul Thompson (2009) advocates oral history as 'a means for transforming both the content and the purpose of history', and states that it has the ability to alter the focus of history itself and can develop new channels of inquiry (p. 3). When used within an institutional framework its ability to deconstruct the divides between the institution's academic and historical perspectives and the world outside is paramount - and can involve, and give history back to, the public (Thompson, 2009). By breaking down these barriers between people and institutions the potential for historical and social understanding and cohesion is further heightened.

My belief is that public cultural and historic institutions have the capacity to function as 'nesting places'. This term, coined by Walter Benjamin (1936), applies to places and occurrences which allow pensiveness and reflection and which encourage active listening and optimal communication - places where communities and individuals

unite and collaborate to allow a nesting of senses, ideas and of history. They are also communal sites where the public are able to mentally re-calibrate, finding space to actively listen, feel and reflect upon the lives of others and what has gone before. Theologian Mary Hess (2012) likens narrative to religious mindfulness in its ability for reflection. In a sense, cultural institutions - the library, the archive, the museum, the heritage site - are the essence of what Benjamin (1936) believes we lost through the technological advances after World War One. They offer the conditions for shared experiences, to be thoughtful and communicative.

As Berman (1992) and Berlant (2008, 2011) agree, we need to create genres and strategies to create connectivity, reflection and 'luminosity' - the telling, receiving and dissemination of first person narratives has that ability for individual and collective affective luminosity. In order for cultural institutions to have conviction in employing personal narratives within exhibitions or events, understanding how and why this interpretation tool can produce affect is imperative.

Key themes and theoretical framework

Personal narratives impact upon self and collective identity, generate narrative empathy and enhance historical understanding. These themes, based on identified theories and concepts, contribute to the development of a theoretical framework which evolves through Chapters Two, Three and Four.

The theoretical framework itself comprises three elements: personal narratives; 'intimate public spheres' (Berlant, 2008) and self-reflection; and our understanding of history and our place in it. The synthesis of these elements contributes to the formation of affective resonance which is a potentially transformative experience.

A number of sub-themes also emerge. These include Goldie's (2009) concept of counterfactual thinking; the politics of personal narratives, and the importance of orality. These minor themes scaffold the theoretical framework and contribute to the argument.

I turn now to outline the main themes.

History and the place of personal narrative

Due to their often egalitarian production and their aptitude for mining our internal as well as external worlds, personal narratives hold a unique position in the discipline of historical production. Historically, personal narratives have been used as a methodological practice, but they are also inserted into many historical and fictional narratives without explicit acknowledgment of their provenance.

Listening to and being included in the production of socio-historical personal narratives imparts a vital sense of agency and ownership of history to both the listener and the speaker. Being a part of history empowers individuals and communities and honours the historical narratives. When museums and cultural institutions recognise and implement strategies which build empowerment and affect within communities they can initiate and advance multiple associated benefits.

Bertolt Brecht (as cited in Manney, 2008), wrote that the purpose of art is to ‘shape reality’ rather than to merely reflect it. Cultural and historical institutions are increasingly taking the position of political and social change-makers by informing visitors of the injustices of the past as they relate to individuals, families and communities, by allowing them to consider better options for the present and future. The inclusion of historic and/or contemporary personal narratives when examining historical grievances can bring the past ‘into the present with extra-ordinary immediacy’, breathing ‘life into history’ (Thompson, 2009, p. 21). The inclusion of small vernacular stories as they relate to historic events and places has the potential to deepen socio-historic understanding and encourage future pro-social behaviours.

This research theme contributes to the conversation about how and why museums might employ the use of personal narratives to create a more expansive understanding of socio-historical narratives. Resulting from the latter and the self-reflective nature of orating and listening, the potentiality for affective resonance and transformative action is awakened.

Personal narrative, self and identity

First person narratives conflate the social, historical and emotional playing an important role in strengthening individual and communal identities. As a narrative form alive with the universality of ‘small world stories’, they engender recognition and connectivity and create what American cultural theorist Lauren Berlant (2008) has termed an ‘intimate public sphere’. Berlant proposes that shared stories, universal modes of engagement and enjoyment produce an understanding between people, and a sense of a public space which has qualities of intimacy. As a genre which recognises and acknowledges the affecting properties of universality and consequent intimacy, personal narratives have the capacity to assist with the formation and evolution of our individual and communal identities. The ability to narrate a detailed chronological narrative about ourselves is vital for mental wellbeing. Similarly, the ability for a community to narrate its past is equally empowering and essential, particularly to younger members of the community.

Furthermore, research suggests that storytelling narratives, both personal and fictional, are cognitively and neurologically processed on a deeper visceral and emotional level than non-narrative information (Mar as cited in Graves, 2014). Benjamin (1936) wrote that a story is different from the transmission of information as it ‘does not expend itself’; rather, ‘it preserves and concentrates its strength and is capable of releasing it even after a long time’ (p. 366). Benjamin (1936) advocated that stories are like ‘the seeds of grain which have lain for centuries in the chambers of the pyramids shut up air-tight’, and that their ‘germinative power’ is retained throughout time (p. 366). The ‘germinative power’ of personal narratives - passed down through generations, across continents and historical time - allows for affective resonance and the defining of self and collective identity.

Narrative empathy

While transhumanists, such as American futurist, P J. Manney (2008), concern themselves with the plight of humanity’s waning empathy as a result of technology, neurohumanists, such as Gallese and Wojciewowski (2011), have set upon the task of finding convergences between human experiences of narrative and their neurological disposition for affect and empathy. Transhumanists, narratologists and neurohumanists have uncovered sound sociological and neurological information

suggesting that narrative has the ability to assist with the development of empathy and understanding of one another. In agreement, Manney (2008) believes that storytelling is a generator of social and cultural liberalisation and change.

Partially due to our embodied response to narrative which allows us to experience the physical feelings of others, humans have both cognitive and neurologically driven processes which enhance their ability to feel empathy which they can be compelled to act upon. However, the levels of affect and narrative engagement are dependent upon a number of interpersonal and narrative factors. These range from predetermined interpersonal characteristics and experiences, to the use of first person dialogue in literary fiction to previous exposure to narrative storytelling.

On a neurological level, narrative's promise of transcending experience, via fiction or nonfiction, into the realms of affect is primarily driven by our mirror neuron activation. Dubbed the 'Ghandi Neurons' (Ramachandran, 2013), due to their ability to generate empathy, these neurological pathways assist with generating empathic responses. Mirror neurons take effect when we see, hear or read about believable characters in emotional situations creating in the viewer a mirroring effect: we grimace; we might turn away in disgust; or become aroused; or lick our lips at the thought of eating an ice cream. But it is not only a vicarious experience. As brain sensors show, our neurological wiring responds exactly the way it would if we were experiencing the act itself.

Counterfactual thinking occurs when we provide alternative endings to events which have already occurred (Goldie, 2009). Listening to personal narratives offers opportunities to counter the facts: to ask 'What if?'; 'How could things be different?' or 'How could I have shaped these events?' Thus, disseminating stories which embed counterfactual thinking may assist listeners to engage reflexively, perhaps prompting better judgement and decision making.

Inclusivity and prosocial behaviour

Psychologists and narrative theorists agree that when the factors driving positive engagement and empathy development via exposure to narrative are activated, the empathy and affect produced can lead to prosocial or altruistic behaviour. Personal

stories allow us to reflect upon what literary theorist Arnold Weinstein (2007) calls our ‘indigenous lines of force’, or our ‘untold psychic and emotional’ histories’ (p. 26). Vernacular narratives have the potential, through their universality, for listeners to see themselves and their own ‘in-group’ within the narratives of those they fear or see as different (Fiske, 2008; Keen, 2006). Our sense of ‘in-group’ status, and its manipulation through narrative storytelling, has the capacity to usurp feelings of xenophobia and prejudice (Keen, 2006; Fiske, 2008). Through recognising universality or versions of ourselves in the narratives of others, we have the chance to reflect upon the ways in which we are similar to those we previously dismissed as foreign or feared. Furthermore, research has revealed that there is a high probability of pro-social behaviour as a result of breaking down prejudice via shared narrative (Fiske, 2008; Keen, 2006).

Personal narratives, in their raw or curated forms, are pervasive within the realm of public history. Despite this, there is scant research on the affective resonance they produce and the consequent impact upon how we interpret, decipher and act upon the lessons of social history. First person narratives have not been scrutinised by neuroscientists, social scientists or narratologists to the same extent as literary fiction. The point at which narrative intersects these three elements - identity, affect and historical understanding - is the primary contribution this thesis makes to both museological and narrative studies. It is this intersection which illuminates the role personal narratives play within public history and the cultural sphere. The study of affective resonance, identity evolution and formation and historical understanding generated by personal narratives are the major contributions to the field of museum and cultural studies.

Preview of chapters

The thesis is presented in two main parts: the Theoretical Framework and the Case Study. These two parts are bookended by the Introduction, the Discussion and Analysis, and Conclusion. Vignettes, appear as a preamble and afterword, positioning first person narratives as integral to the text and as examples of affective resonance.

Chapter Two, *History and the place of personal narrative*, begins to frame the argument through a discussion of traditional forms of historical construction and dissemination. I outline the evolution of oral history from a methodological practice to a valid form of historical record-making, outlining its strength and durability.

Chapter Three, *Personal narrative, self and identity*, focuses on the importance of life chronology for mental and emotional wellbeing and how personal narratives reiterate and reinforce listeners' and readers' understanding of themselves. The chapter also highlights how personal narratives can be used as a tool for emotional and social evolution, and for the growth of collectivity. The concept of counterfactual thinking and its role in self and collective decision-making is also discussed in this chapter.

Utilising the framework of literary narrative empathy and neuroscience respectively, Chapter Four, *Narrative empathy*, focuses on the ways in which narratives generate feelings of empathy, even in situations when one is confronted by xenophobia. Chapter Four elucidates how our neurological composition assists with absorption, interpretation and affective responsiveness to narrative. The theoretical framework emerges at the end of Chapter Four.

In Part Two, Chapter Five, provides an in-depth study of the rationale behind the *High Street Stories* project: its conception, production and participant responses to the site and the mode of storytelling.

The Discussion and Analysis chapter offers a comprehensive examination of the research questions and the broader theoretical foundation. As well, I consider the *High Street Stories* case study and research participants' reactions to it. Here, I seek to reveal how the *High Street Stories*' website generates self-understanding, emotional engagement and historical understanding for my research participants.

The Conclusion draws the various strands of the argument together. In doing so it affirms that vernacular narratives possess the strength to convey affective resonance, emotion and texture of life as it actually is, the lived life of humans daily existence in all its complexity: its success and joys; as well as its daily dullness; its prejudices; its difficulty and isolation.

Methodology

The research aims and objectives

As the research questions are exploratory in nature, the thesis requires a multi-pronged strategy to inform responses. The thesis also requires a selection of methods ‘that will combine to ensure that the data will be sufficiently rich, complex, and contextual to address the question and support the required analysis’, and will ‘best access accounts of behaviour and experience’ (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 78).

Qualitative research methods explore human behaviour related to the research subject, in this case, the acts of listening and telling personal narratives. The qualitative method can be understood as a descriptive examination or inquiry of a subject which often employs participants who assist with measuring and gauging the quality of components relating to the research question. In this project, the research participants’ responses were crucial to understand the merits of personal narratives in soliciting affective resonance through reflections upon self and history.

The thesis aims to produce an analysis of the cogency of first person storytelling in engaging with its listeners and how it functions: to drive empathy, provide historical understanding, and enrich identity. The thesis uses qualitative research with a framework drawn from the literature based on theoretical research.

The methods I deployed for this qualitative study are: a review of the literature; a descriptive and analytical case study which comprised a participant questionnaire and follow up interviews followed by the analysis which sought convergences and synergies between the theory and the case study.

This research model was used to uncover patterns and similarities within and between the qualitative components of the study in order to examine the research questions from a number of angles. An exploration through the lens of *High Street Stories*, a project I have a familiar association with, allowed for close analysis of participant responses. As a relatively unexamined area of study, the research has potential to lead

academic theory of affective resonance within cultural and socio-historical interpretation as related to the use of personal narratives.

I outline each of the research methods below.

Case Study (*High Street Stories*)

A case study is an empirical social inquiry focused on the real-life context of an experience or phenomenon, in which, according to Yin (1994), the ‘boundaries between phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident’ (p. 1). Researchers use case studies when they have little control over the events being studied and when the area of study is a ‘contemporary phenomenon in a real-life context’ (Yin, 1994, p. 1). As a research method with multiple variables and sources of study, the case study as evident in this thesis, often asks ‘why’ or ‘how’ and suggests possible links between existing or evident phenomenon (Yin, 1994).

A feature of the single example case study, which this thesis presents, is that it has defined boundaries. The *High Street Stories* website has clear boundaries in that it is temporal and has contemporary relevance and local significance. However, the larger contexts, as Yin (1994) states, are not clearly demarcated and introduce a number of variables such as reflective capabilities and the theories of affective resonance. The *High Street Stories* case study was selected as it reflects many of the issues and characteristics identified in the theoretical framework (Yin, 1994, p.1).

This thesis employs an exploratory qualitative case study as the topic required a broad approach because it is based on close listening and questioning of participants. A broad examination from multiple angles was important to be able to explore the topic thoroughly - through literature; discussing the case study material with participants - asking them challenging questions and encouraging them to think about the project from different angles; then deeply considering where the confluences lay between the theoretical framework or literature and the case study participants’ responses.

The case study attempts to find knowledge of a particular aspect or aspects of a phenomenon and in order to seek out and understand issues which are integral to the case study itself. In the case of *High Street Stories* it is the phenomenon of the

prevailing first person storytelling and how recipients respond, and whether affective resonance is present which is of particular interest. Yin (1994) defines this as, when ‘logic’ links the research ‘to the proposition’. He writes that this is a process of ‘matching pieces of information to rival patterns that can be derived from the propositions’ (p.1).

The components of the case study are, a description of *High Street Stories* based on evidence drawn from a variety of sources - primary sources and the academic literature.

Due to not being present in Christchurch to undertake participant research more actively, the strengths of this method are that by communicating with participants over an extended time frame a wealth of interpretative responses arise. As a result, and the fact they are context-specific, single case studies can be empirically-rich.

The limitations of the single case study are the potential for the researcher’s subjectivity and issues related to generalisation from a single case. The external validity can be questioned due to the fact the research is conducted on one case. However, as Flyvbjerg (2006) contends, both generalizability and validity testing are valued in scientific studies but have less influence in the social sciences where the force of a single example is respected.

My objective is that this ‘multi-nodal’ approach, secondary sources, and participant research will allow the research to be ‘valid, rigorous’ and ‘meaningful’ (Mason, 2006, p. 9). This combination of methods allows for multiple readings and perspectives of the case study and of the effect of narrative more generally. This approach, grounded in a strong theoretical foundation, will render a strong case for personal narratives as integral to the development of affective resonance.

Research ethics

Research ethics provide a set of parameters and guidelines in the form of ethical principles to assist researchers and their participants to work together with trust,

transparency, fairness and integrity. The principles ensure that both the participants' concerns and the researcher's obligations to produce public knowledge are met.

As the recording of human experiences is fundamental to the production of most research in the humanities and social sciences the role of ethics and how they are integrated and activated requires significant consideration. The research process must attempt, where possible, to contribute positively to the participant experience and researchers must be cognisant of the potential harm to participants, and those close to them, if they do not abide by ethical protocols and principles (Simons, 2010, p. 98).

The main features of research ethics are the principles of informed and voluntary consent; confidentiality and anonymity. These principles are activated by formal procedures, most commonly full disclosure of the research aims and its conduct and proceeding only when participants give consent. Such processes ensure participants' control over their voice and what may be published; confidentiality where requested and the potential for anonymisation (Simons, 2010, p. 97). As the researcher I was aware of the gains, losses and consequences of the release of nonconsensual information and how reporting information can change the participants' meaning or diminish their perspective (Simons, 2010, p. 97).

To ensure the ethical principles were communicated and activated in this thesis I provided the four participants information about the research questions, the case study itself and the research aims and objectives in as much detail as possible before asking if they would participate. After agreeing all participants gave their informed and voluntary consent and completed standard consent forms (see appendix). The participants chose to assign themselves pseudonyms thus securing their anonymity. Simons (2010) believes that anonymisation is beneficial as it shores up privacy for the future and that without it one 'cannot guarantee that those who read [the] case study will respond fairly and sensitively (p. 107). As Simons (2010) points out, there can be 'repercussions from readers with different persuasions' and anonymity protects participants from 'unwarranted or unfair judgment' (p. 107).

The participants answered written questions about a number of the recorded stories on the website *High Street Stories*. Once I had reviewed their answers, I discussed their

answers with them, gave them the opportunity to rectify inaccuracies and to add more details to their answers. I was diligent in ensuring that the process was fair and transparent and that the outcomes of the participant research were accurate. Simons (2010) concludes:

it is only in and through relationships in the field, supported by procedures and negotiations over what is fair, relevant and just in the precise socio-political context, that we can know if we have acted ethically in relation to those who are part of our case (p. 110).

Literature Review

This literature review examines and synthesises literature at the intersection of a number of relevant academic disciplines, in order to determine key concepts, gaps and convergences as they relate to the thesis topic.

Current Literature - Gaps and Convergences

Currently, there is little published research on the topic of first person narrative's impact upon affective resonance. However, synthesising relevant literature from the disciplines of oral history, narrative theory, neohumanism and psychology makes identifiable theoretical connections.

There are three strands to the literature: the historical position of personal narratives both historically and epistemologically; the psychology and evolution of self and collective identity; and literary narrative theory and neurological study. As the scaffolding for investigation these diverse areas of study provide a strong structure from which to connect and diverge from. The key themes that have emerged from this literature are now outlined.

Key themes emerging from the literature

History and the place of personal narrative

A number of theologically driven studies (de Certeau 1984; Hess, 2010; Trueman, 1998) explore the representation of history and its intersection with modernity, self-identity and Christian values, providing depth to the study of personal narrative as a form of historical representation. Theologian Carl Trueman (1998) believes that the production of history is a ‘manipulation’ or ‘creation’ which usually has an ulterior political purpose and that it leaves humans devoid of tradition in our current state of ‘anti-tradition’ (p. 31). According to historical revisionist Alun Munslow (2012) it is only possible to represent the past ‘in a narrative which is fabricated, factious, factitious, factual(ist), fictive and figurative’ (p. 116). However, the work of Karl Marx and the first official oral historian Henry Mayhew paved the way for new forms of historicity which recognised the value of human stories within social history. Contemporary cultural theorists such as Lauren Berlant (2008) and Marshal Berman (1992) use Marx’s models as a foundation from which to devise their own theories regarding our place in the modern world. Australian academic Anna Poletti (2011) uses Berlant’s theory of affect to analyse the benefits of digital storytelling saying that it contributes to ‘the prevalence of intimacy and affect in the construction of contemporary citizenship’, through ‘propagating particular ideas about the power of story to foster and promote community bonds through the exchange of narratives of life experience’ (p. 73).

Theologian Mary Hess (2012) and Australian academic Anna Poletti (2011) believe that the concept of ‘anti-tradition’ (Trueman, 1998) - commercialisation and ‘pervasive marginalisation’ (de Certeau, 1984) - can be ameliorated through storytelling genres such as digital storytelling. Advocates of this genre believe digital storytelling produces affect through deep listening and engagement, because of the combination of autobiographical content and community driven production.

Theorists and practitioners of oral history such as Abrams (2010), Butler (2011), and Thompson (2009) advocate its use as a method of historical production, not only for its injection of real life into historical narratives but also its inclusion of people of all socio-economic, religious and sexual persuasion. Berlant (2008) wrote that this process of creating ‘intimate publics’ through ‘small stories’ renders real people

‘luminous’. Furthermore, Thompson (2009) writes that oral history has the potential to include people as ‘heroes’ in their own history, providing a stronger connection with historical material. Therefore personal narratives create valuable, diverse historical recollections which enrich both historical representation and humanity - both individually and collectively.

Personal narrative, self and identity

Neuroscientists, psychologists and narratologists agree that a fractured life story creates psychological and identity deficits (Abrams, 2010; Gottschall, 2012; Lewis as cited in Grimshaw, 2015). Research suggests that the necessity to be able to recite, rehearse and refine our own autobiographical narratives is vital to wellbeing (Bluck & Habermas, 2000; Gottschall, 2012; McKay, 2014; Polkinghorne, 1991). Additionally, the stories we hear and engage in become part of what and whom we identify with, forming, to a large part, the basis of our ever changing and evolving chronological identity (Abrams, 2010).

Narrative empathy

Although much of the existing literature dealing with narrative and emotional response focuses on fictional narratives, it does not specifically exclude nonfiction storytelling. When authors and theorists such as Benjamin (1936), de Certeau (1984), Keen (2006), Sklar (2009), Koopman (2015) and Graves (2014) write about the power of ‘story’ as ‘affective’ and enduring, their focus is the form the narrative takes rather than the distinction between fiction and nonfictional narrative. Therefore, studies of fictional narratives in this context can be likened to nonfictional aestheticised personal narratives, which are structured with the sensibilities of narrative at the fore. ‘Information’ which does not abide narrative structure (Mar, as cited in Graves, 2014) does not produce self-reflection or affect as it is void of the ability to ‘transcend time like a story can nor can it provide wisdom’ (Benjamin, 1936, p. 364).

Academics focusing on the affective resonance of contemporary and modernist literature (Grimshaw, 2015; van Stralen, 2005; Weinstein, 2007), highlight that it is the use of autobiography that produces high levels of affect, through reader recognition and reflection. This thesis utilises the Modernist authors’ response to industrialisation and World War One as analogous to the necessity of personal narratives within our

contemporary cyber society of ‘anti-tradition’ (Hess, 2012; Trueman, 1998). Broadening the research to affecting fictional texts, such as literary modernism and existentialism, and tracing the foundations of those texts back to autobiography, is a useful alternative framework to view fictionalised personal narratives and their capacity for affective resonance.

Despite the enduring value of personal narratives, the study of ‘emotion’, until recently, has not received critical attention. Until the rise of neurohumanism (Gallese et al., 2011) and transhumanism (Manney, 2008) in the last ten years, the study and understanding of ‘emotion’, particularly in relation to narrative, has been undervalued and undermined. The validity and potential emotional affect of personal storytelling has been disregarded. Listening and researching the effects of story on emotion has been met with general discomfort and ‘embarrassment’ (Pence, 2004). As early as 1936, Walter Benjamin predicted the death of the story and wrote that ‘the ability to exchange experiences is dwindling’ because ‘experience has fallen in value’ (p. 366). Without honest communication of experience we lose an essential aspect of historical learning, or what Benjamin (1936) would call ‘counsel’, and what Peter Goldie (2009) calls counterfactual thinking. Similarly, our neurological pathways have hard wired a counterfactual mechanism. When we experience narratives or events with heightened emotion; our recall of these experiences intensifies; we learn from the consequences changing our own behaviour, and often encouraging others to do the same (Fiske, 2008; Keen, 2006).

In the last decade academics have reconsidered affect within narrative, with scientific studies suggesting that both empathy and xenophobia are partially inherent to our neurological circuitry (Fiske, 2008; Gallese and Wojciehowski, 2011; Keen, 2006). Again, these studies do not deal with personal narrative, but with literary narrative or observed action and experience. The role of storytelling via personal narrative has become of paramount importance in a world of ever increasing disaffection caused by transience and a reality disconnect due to the global uptake of technology (Benjamin, 1936; Trueman, 1998). In 1998, Trueman wrote that a state of ‘anti-tradition’ was antithetical to human bonding and agency and it has become apparent we need to find ways to push against it. Shuman (2005) offers a banner of hope stating that ‘storytelling is an aspect of the ordinary’, yet ‘offers as one of its greatest promises the

possibility of empathy, of understanding others' (p. 5). Therefore as Manney (2008) advocates, we must tell as many stories as possible, and we must listen to the stories of others.

Psychologist and academic Susan Fiske (2008) conducted experiments which illustrate how our neurological response is to exclude those who are different to us, yet when even a tenuous, narrative and social connection is made with them, we can overcome what appears to be naturally occurring xenophobia. In the early 1990s Italian neuroscientists, Gallese, Migone and Eagle (2007) discovered that we are neurologically predisposed to feeling what others feel because our mirror neurons respond synchronously when reading or listening to audio narrative experiences or fictional events. Narrative theorists such as Keen (2006), Sklar (2009), and Koopman (2015), neurohumanists such as Gallese and Wojciehowski (2011) and psychologists like Fiske (2008) have taken this research further by fusing studies on mirror neuron activation within literary studies of narrative empathy to elucidate the ways in which literary storytelling generates strong affective resonance.

Further to the neurological research on narrative empathy, narrative theorists such as Keen (2006), Sklar (2009), Koopman (2015), and Chiate (2013), state that our ability to draw from one's own experiences makes richer connections with first person narratives.

By synthesising relevant ideas and theories in these diverse texts this thesis illustrates a cyclic phenomenon whereby exposure to personal narratives allows for self-reflection, collectivity, empathic responses and historical understanding. However, the literature does state that further research is necessary in the area of empathic responses to oral history (Cohen, 2013) and to determine future pro-social behaviour resulting from narrative empathy (Fiske, 2008; Keen, 2006).

Summary

Walter Benjamin's (1936) sentiment that we were 'tiny, fragile humans,' vulnerable and at odds with a technologically advancing post-World World War One landscape is still resonant today (p. 362). We are now engulfed by social and economic changes

from technological advances, massive consumerism to global unrest and widespread pervasive fear of otherness (Manney, 2008). Storytelling, both fiction and nonfiction, has the potential to undermine this pervasive marginality and is rich in personal and public benefits.

This investigation, at the intersection of personal narrative, self-reflection, empathy and history, provides a rich illustration of the potential of vernacular narratives. Their ability to deliver considerably more than small subservient stories running parallel to official historical narratives make them key protagonists in the toolkit of cultural institutions. As ‘an aspect of the ordinary’, storytelling is alive with the promise of assisting us in the realisation of our collective, historical and affective potential (Shuman, 2005, p. 5).

The following chapter, the first of three that develop a theoretical framework for this study, will explore the way in which personal narratives fit within the discipline of historical thought and literature. That chapter suggests that vernacular narratives not only impact and affect historical production and its dissemination but also shows how individuals and collectives position themselves historically.

PART ONE:

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Chapter Two

History and the place of personal narrative

Introduction

Comprising the first part of the theoretical framework this chapter elucidates a number of the issues focused on: the production and dissemination of historical narratives, how personal narratives fit into the sphere of wider historical narratives and the impact they have on the historical past and present. Positioned at the periphery of the collecting and disseminating of personal narratives, these issues feed into the discussion on how vernacular narratives fit within and alongside historical narratives.

My intent is not to reconcile the veracity of the two forms of historicity nor compare or contrast their efficacy in depth. Although, in order to analyse the value of personal narratives' within cultural and historical interpretation, and its role in the production of affective resonance and historical understanding, it is beneficial to present a brief examination of how official history, that is history constructed by historians, and personal narratives are produced and perceived. By acknowledging and highlighting the artificiality and perceived difficulties of both forms, research into the strength of personal narratives can commence.

This chapter also tracks the birth of oral history as emerging in parallel with a change in historical thought and the 'democratisation of history' (Trueman, 1998, p. 32) which provided a voice and visibility for marginalised peoples. The last 60 years have seen personal narratives become increasingly pervasive as a methodological practice and as history in their own right. Despite criticism of their potential 'subjectivity' personal narratives have to propensity to both clarify and to cut through understanding of and emotional response to experiences of societal 'anti-tradition'. Theorists Berlant (2008) and Shuman (2005) write that these 'small world stories' are rich in universality and recognition. The potential wealth of humility and understanding born of this universality is defined in Berlant's (2008) theory of affect which is realised when an 'intimate public sphere' is created through connectivity with texts and their characters.

This first chapter forms the foundation for the argument whereby personal narratives are positioned historically and their key asset, universality, is juxtaposed with contemporary theory. This chapter is the platform from which to view the subsequent wider theory of personal narratives and affective resonance.

A brief history of personal narratives

Modes of history making, informed by the changing forms of production, changed irrevocably from the seventeenth century. Driven by the economic and practical innovations of the Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, The European Enlightenment period, which occurred in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, brought with it ‘successive waves of liberation thinking’ (Moore, 2009). Consequently, new ways of producing and perceiving history appeared with a thrust toward values of liberty and new forms of justice. The Enlightenment allowed the everyday man to think for himself and act as an empowered agent (Moore, 2009). This new ‘enlightened’ sense of liberation of the ‘autonomous thinker’ (Munslow, 2012) and the drive toward new ideas brought with it a highly critical view of history and tradition which was perceived as being part of ‘the freeing of humankind from bondage and darkness’ (Trueman, 1998, p. 30).

Prior to this, the thrust of history was primarily political and the lives of ordinary people and the economic and religious workings of society were given very little attention apart from in times of crisis (Thompson, 2009, p. 3). However, many of the early autobiographical works between the mid-seventeenth and mid-nineteenth century were primarily examples of moral living and published by those of religious persuasion: Methodists, Protestant Camisards, and Puritans (Thompson 2009, p. 39). During this time the first testimonies recorded about the lives of women also appeared and the first notable full autobiography was published in 1845 about an ‘improving tailor’, Thomas Carter (Thompson 2009, p. 39).

Thompson (2009) states that nearing the end of the eighteenth century, new forms of historical writing appeared. The beginning of this more ‘independent’ social history presented ‘no professional separation between the processes of creating information, constructing social theory and historical analysis’ resulting in difficulty in separating

the origins of oral history ‘method from general developments in the collection and use of oral evidence’ (Thompson, 2009, p. 40).

From the mid-nineteenth century the working classes made their political presence evident through works using autobiography, and many authors showed a concern for retaining the ‘liveliness of working speech forms in print’ (Thompson, 2009, p. 40). These events marked the beginnings of the branch of historical source finding which today we call oral history, or first person historical sources. Although these first recorded uses for oral methodologies were primarily for the collection of social and financial information, oral sources soon became recognised for their abilities to unmask the affected human condition.

Karl Marx’s (1818-1883) theories of historical materialism developed through the lens of the social upheaval of the Industrial Revolution, in which he linked ‘human agency (the ability to act independently as human beings) and social, cultural, economic and intellectual structures’ (Munslow, 2012, p. 5). This model was integral to the changes in historical thought and the power structures it perpetuated. Marx suggested that men ‘make their own history’, however, not necessarily as they might wish, insisting that they most often inherited their historical conditions (Trueman, 1998, p. 51). His overriding analysis of tradition and history, according to theologian and church historian Carl Trueman (1998), was that they were ‘too often ways of cultivating false consciousness, of maintaining class distinctions and therefore of keeping the poor in their subordinate position in the economic food chain’ (p. 40).

In Britain from 1801 census investigations were undertaken by the Royal Commissions and Parliamentary Social Inquires which became known as *Blue Books* (Thompson, 2009, p. 41). Although he did not solicit oral histories directly, Marx utilised the first person recollections from the *Blue Books* for his socio-political writings in order to ‘buttress his arguments with unassailable authorities’ (Thompson, 2009, p. 43). Marx’s *Das Kapital* (as cited in Thompson, 2009, p. 41) is said to have ‘set a key precedent’ for future historical methodology due to their use of these sources.

Although most modern historians are less transparent in revealing their socio-political position, ‘since scholarly standards are seen to conflict with declared bias’ (Thompson, 2009, p. 6), Marx’s theories of history production impacted upon all future generations of social science historians. Marx’s theory of historical materialism primarily influenced social policy and economics, and his proposed approach to historical research that of ‘history from below’ can be seen in the approach of many oral historians and academics who strive to present *juxtapolitical* worlds (Berlant, 2008). *Juxtapolitical* meaning: narratives which run parallel to, yet are of equal importance to the dominant political world (Henderson, 2013). Marx saw the vitality and social and historical value in the proletariat-as-protagonist model - which has since been a prominent form of oral history production.

Featured in the *Morning Chronicle London Labour*, Marx’s contemporary Henry Mayhew’s work has been called ‘the first empirical survey into poverty’ and was the first true collection of oral histories accompanied by an ethical commentary (Thompson, 2009, p. 44). According to contemporary historians, Mayhew’s work captured the nuances of London’s working class so well readers can hear their voices due to the fact these personal stories conjure up life in such fine detail and from multiple angles (Hart, 2010; Swift, 2010). Thompson (2009) believes this is why they continue to be read today as historical documents. In many ways Marx and Mayhew paved the way philosophically and academically for many future socio-historical and socio-political studies.

The use of first person narratives elevated history to a higher calling (Thompson, 2009) and challenged a number of accepted ideas about history. The general structure and source of history was challenged as was the concept of ownership over history and most importantly, its latent potential to incite political and social change (Thompson, 2009, p. 23). History’s role in ‘merely comforting’ or reflecting one’s own world had been irrevocably quashed (Thompson, 2009, p. 23).

By allowing personal experiences of socio-historical events through the vernacular voices of the Industrial Revolution to be heard, the traditional power structures of historical production were beginning to be deconstructed. Personal narratives thereby had the power to provide ‘the social purpose of history’ and teach the wider public to

be aware of and to challenge the social and political status quo and our own role in its evolution (Thompson, 2009, p. 3).

The power structures of historical narratives

Analysis of official and vernacular narrative histories render both forms of historicity fraught in terms of their purpose, production and perception. Historical narratives are widely acknowledged as being ‘constructed’ by agenda-focused historians yet personal narratives are perceived by many historians and academics as being overly subjective and factually dubious (Munslow, 2012; Trouillot, 1995; Trueman, 1998). In many respects both forms of historical production are seen as an objective concoction of historians and curators. History rarely exists in a form which we are familiar without the sculpting hand of an authorial ‘objectivity’ or more preferably, the ‘inter-diegetic’ voice of the historian (Munslow, 2012, p. 120). Either implicit or explicit, the historians’ trace is always detectable.

In Marxist and Foucauldian terms, the ‘bourgeois’ were originally the recipients and perpetrators of a ‘certain kind’ of historical production which we should view with skepticism (Munslow, 2012). Trueman (1998) wrote that its ‘exponents had more power within the historical profession, or within society in general, than its critics (p. 32). Critics of historical production warn that caution is required when consuming history and suggest that we should be skeptical of the form in which history is presented as, according to historian Alun Munslow (2012), historical narratives can only be ‘fabricated, factious, factitious, factual(ist), fictive and figurative’ (p. 116), as ‘despite reference, verification, factualism and smart inferences’ it is impossible to know the past as it truly existed (p. 19). French intellectual Michel Foucault believed history was about ‘power, about classifying and marginalising, about promoting a ‘them’ and ‘us’ mentality’, that is based upon power relations (as cited in Trueman, 1998, p. 40).

More directly, Trueman (1998) wrote,

...histories do not offer explanations of how we come to be where we are in the traditional sense of the word; rather they offer bids for power, attempts to legitimise particular institutions or attitudes in the present.

Thus, historical narratives, along with other attempts to provide all-embracing explanations of reality or to make truth-claims, must be unmasked and exposed as the bids for power that they really are (p. 32).

By arriving at the point at which history is acknowledged as a constructed 'narrative' it is possible to analyse their fit for purpose production and to see how, to a large degree, we are consumers of ready made historical narratives (Munslow, 2012). It is impossible to experience or understand the past as it actually was because the 'historian-as-author relies on precisely the same authorial mechanisms, manoeuvres, strategies and schemas as all authors' (Munslow, 2012, p. 119).

Twentieth century Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm (as cited in Trueman, 1998) asserts that since the Industrial Revolution there exist three overlapping types of historical tradition.

Hobsbawm (as cited in Trueman, 1998) believe that:

Some traditions establish or symbolise the social cohesion of certain groups; some establish or legitimise institutions or certain power relations; and some inculcate value systems, patterns of behaviour, and social conventions in the interest of socialisation and social stability (p. 31).

Trueman (1998) deduces that manipulation is what underlies these three forms and that written history usually has an 'ulterior political purpose, either of social control or legitimisation' (p. 31). However, the manipulation of history also applies to the way in which first person narratives have been recited and used within historical literature - they too have been manipulated to reinforce power, values and political systems.

Political agendas work to mould and produce a certain type of present, and certain histories, through their truth-claims, and to muzzle others which are seen as threatening. As oral history in the mid-twentieth century was broadly perceived and utilised as a way of capturing and giving validity to the voices of the marginalised as a counter to dominant historical voices, it is important to investigate how and why the political elite favour, and reject certain narratives.

Political agendas and personal narratives

The political strategies of banning texts, imprisoning, exiling and executing academics, agitators and artists who speak out against a political regime through their personal experiences and ideologies is testament to the power of first person narratives. Personal narrative's capacity for creating a collective 'intimate public sphere' (Berlant, 2008) can generate public power which can unbalance the status quo offering the potential to change the course of history. The keepers of political power, fearful of public backlash and of the power of public opinion, are also often the makers of their country's history, particularly within totalitarian or dictatorial regimes. Through the banning of texts and voices these regimes stymie histories which conflict with or contradict the prevailing political thought which either exists to retain the status quo or work toward new political direction. Leaders fear these less mediated texts may gnaw away at the constructed veracity of the country's history.

A surge of oral history projects in the early 1990s in Eastern Europe appeared after the fall of Communism which provided counter historical perspectives to what the rest of the world had been told. The Czech writer, dissident and post-Communist President, Vaclav Havel (as cited in Barne, Lang and Ye, 2006), observed how the singular story perpetuated by state socialism reduced personal lives to 'undifferentiated stereotypes and formulaic accounts' as these lives were 'submerged by a collective tale of History writ large' (p. x) which silenced all other narratives. Havel said:

The uniqueness of the human creature became a mere embellishment on the laws of history, and the tension and thrill inherent in real events were dismissed as accidental and so unworthy of the attention of scholarship. History became boredom (as cited in Barne et al., 2006, p. x).

China also suffered the loss of recorded personal experiences of history as a result of Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution. The Chinese examples of propagandised personal narratives, during the time of the Cultural Revolution, illustrate the power of political might in quashing and manipulating the stories which contradict the voices of the dominant political party. In the book *The Battle for China's Past*, Moby Gao (2008) wrote that the most effective power is 'the power that manipulates memories' because

memory can 'be a form of knowledge that has truth and moral claims' (p. 47). He continues by stating that power can 'abuse memories' because it orientates them toward certain narratives. Citing French philosopher Jean Paul Gustave Ricoeur, Barne et al. (2006) writes that 'It is through the narrative function that memory is incorporated in the making of identity' (p. 47), which demonstrates the immense weight of the narratives we tell and receive, in both the formation of collective thought, and of individual identity.

'Anti-tradition', marginality and oral history

It is the often hidden, underlying agendas of power which Trueman (1998) says we need to discover. The questions he implores we ask are, 'who owns history?' and 'who wields power on the present?' (p. 32). During the 'democratisation of history' in the 1960s, asking this question created 'a ferocious reaction against the traditional narrative of history that focused on Europe and on white heterosexual males' (Trueman, 1998, p. 32). A myriad of alternative histories of and by marginalised and minority groups were produced after this time, many of which were based on personal narratives. Oral history began to function as a means of representing the unrepresented - women's rights, racial issues and unionist struggles. These projects along with the flourishing New Journalism by exponents such as Joan Didion, Norman Mailer and Tom Wolfe who worked to uncover existences previously considered unworthy of official documentation provided exposure to narratives of reality and affect.

Personal narratives often focus on the historically excluded in order to counter emerging hegemonic perspectives which, more often than not, exclude or mute alternative or counter interpretations (Abrams, 2010). In order to see history as more than a constructed chronological list of homogenous successes, history needs to be all encompassing, and to include peoples of all social strata. In addition to acting as a counter-balance to the political and social status quo, according to Thompson (2009), these personal narratives, 'thrust life into history itself' (p. 12). Furthermore, he writes that the process and product of oral narratives 'allows heroes not just from the leaders, but also from the unknown majority of people', essentially making for 'fuller human beings' (p. 12).

Alessandro Portelli (as cited in Hamilton and Shopes, 2008) wrote that power is imparted to the silenced by ‘amplifying the voice’ (p. 3). Personal narratives give voice to the disenfranchised and marginalised. However, as Michel de Certeau (1984) wrote, marginality is no longer confined to minority groups but has become ‘rather massive and pervasive’ (p. xvii). Due to the alienation of consumer culture of those who feel marginalised have become a universal ‘silent majority’ (de Certeau, 1984, p. xvii). This sentiment, which Trueman (1998) coined ‘anti-tradition’, is now more true than ever. In a sense, Marx preempted the current pervasive and marginalising effects of consumerism. In his *Communist Manifesto* (1848), Marx confirmed his fear of capitalism as the precursor to the loss of tradition.

All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind (Marx as cited in Spalding, 2015).

Not only has the world become full of marginality but we have simultaneously lost our ability to be part of, and perpetuate, a history of tradition which is key to a sense of belonging (Benjamin, 1936). Trueman (1998) echoes de Certeau’s (1984) concern for capitalism’s impact upon humanity saying that:

Multinational consumerism reduces all of life to a bland and rootless present, and, as humanity finds itself free-floating and rootless, it desperately strives to create (rather than rediscover) for itself a history and a network of tradition which will give it value and identity (Trueman, 1998, p. 41).

Trueman (1998) continues by claiming that the death of history and tradition has left us feeling anything but liberated and that ‘it has merely created a hole into which any old fairy-story can now be fitted’ (p. 41). Conveying a similar sentiment to theologians Hess (2012) and Trueman (1998), in 1936 Walter Benjamin wrote that it was the ‘concomitant symptom of the secular production forces of history’, which removed

narrative storytelling from ‘the realm of living speech’ (p. 364). However, remaining optimistic about its ability to flourish again, he wrote that its decline made it possible to see a ‘new beauty’ in what was vanishing (p. 364).

American humanist, Marxist and philosopher Marshall Berman (1992) wrote that despite deploring ‘modernisation’s betrayal of its own human promise’ (n.p) Modernists endeavoured to celebrate the triumphs of the modern world. He proposes a solution to the thwarting of civic belonging imposed by modernisation by stating that we must become the ‘subjects’ and the ‘objects’ of modernisation, and that we must learn to take ownership over the world and change the world that is changing us. Berman (1992) believed that people have power to regain what was lost through modernisation.

In order to become ‘subjects’ who act as ‘agents’ of change (Trouillot, 1995) within a modern world we need to develop a language to articulate and generate affective resonance in order to create ‘intimate public spheres’ of affect (Berlant, 2008). Reinforcing the necessity of people to become the active subjects of history for a better future, Thompson (2009) wrote that autobiographical material is a lesson in the social and political status quo, and in our role in its evolution. First person storytelling not only contributes alternate historical perspectives, but through its implicit expressions of universality it also has the capacity to form ‘intimate public spheres’ (Berlant, 2008).

The creation of an ‘intimate public sphere’

In 1998, Lauren Berlant wrote that intimacy, ‘involves an aspiration for a narrative about something shared, a story about both oneself and others that will turn out in a particular way’ (p. 281). A decade later Berlant (2008) coined the term an ‘intimate public sphere’. In 2011 she asserted that the historical present ‘needs to find genres that enable its inhabitants to assess the relation of event to effect, of domination to creative life practices, of normativity to social imaginaries’ (para 10). Through their ability to break the power structures of traditional methods and the delivery of historical production, and more importantly their focus on ‘small world stories’, personal narratives have the capacity to be this genre of affect through their ability to form Berlant’s (2008) ‘intimate public sphere’.

Drawn from Marxist theory, Lauren Berlant's (2008) 'affect theory' of the public sphere is primarily concerned with how public spheres are 'affect worlds'. Her theory of the 'intimate public sphere' proposes that affect and emotion produce belonging more viscerally than rational and deliberate modes of thought and being (Berlant, 2008). Berlant (2008) coined the term 'intimate public sphere', as pertaining to the space and intimacy created when:

An intimate public operates when a market opens up to a bloc of consumers, claiming to circulate texts and things that express those people's core interests and desires. When this kind of 'culture of circulation' takes hold, participants in the intimate public *feel* it expresses what is common among them, a subjective likeness that seems to emanate from their history and their ongoing attachments and actions (p. 5).

Although Berlant's (2008) theory presents a cynical view of modern belonging as being generated via 'a market', she says, over time this artificially constructed 'intimate public sphere' provides a 'permission to thrive', a 'permission to live small but to feel large' (p. 3). Berlant's (2008) feminist perspective of small, niche worlds of mothers, the sexually marginalised and of women who crave sentimentality, can be replaced with those whose 'small life' stories have become historical narratives - those who live on a certain road, who worked in a certain job or experienced a similar hardship. As de Certeau (1984) asserted, these are 'the tactics of consumption, the ingenious ways in which the weak make use of the strong', thus lending 'a political dimension to everyday practices' (p. xvii). Similarly, Berlant (2008) would call this 'juxtapolitical'; everyday lives which 'mark out non-political situations' which are 'lived as a space of continuity and optimism and social-cultivation' (Berlant, 2008, p. 10). She says that it is possible for the affective and 'intimate public sphere' to harness 'the power of emotion' to 'change what is structural in the world' (Berlant, 2008, p. 12).

Amy Shuman (2005), author of *Other People's Stories: Entitlement Claims and the Critique of Empathy*, believes that a universal humanitarian connection occurs firstly

through making the ordinary profound, which she says is always possible. Similar to Berlant's 'intimate public' yet conceived of a few years earlier, Shuman (2005) writes 'small-world stories exemplify the blurred boundaries between the everyday and the exceptionally meaningful' (p. 93). On the cohesive power of universality Shuman (2005) wrote that through these 'small-world stories' we discover that the wider world is not 'random and chaotic' but in fact has a pattern, a universality, and that our own experiences are not dissimilar to those of others. In turn these 'intimate public spheres' of recognition have the potential to enrich 'contemporary citizenship' (Poletti, 2011, p. 73) and form inclusive and potentially transformative historical narratives.

In response to Berlant's (2008) theory of an 'intimate public sphere', Australian academic Anna Poletti (2011) suggests that personal stories constructed by the teller in a community context of digital storytelling are a genre which has the capacity to provide the intimacy and sense of belonging which Berlant (2008) proposes. Poletti (2011) writes that 'given its formal restrictions and thematic preoccupations, digital storytelling produces texts focused on affective connection with the audience, contributing to the prevalence of intimacy and affect in the construction of contemporary citizenship' (p. 73). Within oral history practice, the voices of everyday people are prominent and act as a counterweight to the forces of hegemonic culture and history production. Where people see that history has relevance to the lives of ordinary people as historical agents and subjects it reveals a more connected and coherent historical present (Thompson, 2009). However as historical documents, personal narratives veracity can be questioned due to the subjective nature of the recalled memories and the intersubjectivity of the process of interviewing and collecting first person narratives.

The historical value of the subjectivity and intersubjectivity of personal narratives

Oral history theorists defend personal narratives ability to provide historical authenticity, and its celebration of the nuances of memory, saying that, 'oral history has tested the limits of conventional historical writing by privileging personal experience, allowing for subjectivity, celebrating memory's inconsistencies and forcing the historian to be reflexive about research practice' (Abrams, 2010, p. 31).

Alessandro Portelli (as cited in Abrams, 2010, p. 53) reminds us that ‘history has no content without their stories’ and further to this, historian Michel-Rolph Trouillot (1995) states that ‘history reveals itself only through the production of specific narratives’ and that subjectivity is an ‘integral part of the event and of any satisfactory description of that event’ (p. 23). The use of these narratives in socio-historical interpretation is therefore essential for the public to see themselves as both ‘subjects’ and ‘agents’ within contemporary history production.

It is how people make sense of the past which is most interesting to a number of oral history theories (Fisch as cited in Hamilton and Shopes, 2008). Sean Field (2008) discusses personal narratives in Cape Town’s District Eight, saying that, in this context, narrators weave together historical stories and events and nostalgia which produce solace and allow them to cope with the emotional losses of the past and the current economic problems. Field (2008) suggests that oral historians need to empathise with the imaginative recreations of the ‘idealized images of a past community’ and to assist that process (p. 117). He says that it is this process which provides coherence to fragmented or violated communities and that it is these imagined communities which provide ‘perceptual framing for individual and collective struggle’ (p. 117).

The position of creating one’s own historical sources, Abrams (2010) states, is a privileged one in which intersubjectivity, the role of the interviewer, and the use of the material must be acknowledged. The material must be handled with respect for the interview subject, context and audience and with full knowledge that your role as historian is one of ‘ventriloquist’ or ‘stage director’ (Abrams, 2010, p. 24). Not only is first person narrative fraught in terms of its production ‘in an interview environment pulsating with influences’ (Abrams, 2010, p. 55) but also the ways in which the audio or transcript is treated once the interview is completed requires skill and compassion (Thompson, 2009, p. 23). The way in which personal narratives are positioned in terms of their accompanying paratext or curation, making them acceptable for the epistemological structure of cultural institutions and the way in which they interact with larger historical narratives provides the framework for use in socio-historical interpretation.

Personal narratives and official histories within cultural institutions

Trueman (1998) writes that despite its shortcomings, history can be ‘profoundly helpful, even liberating, to humanity’ (p. 40). Bedding personal voices within the official history adds value to the latter and allows the voice to convey stories rich in geographic, temporal and social specificity. There are numerous ways in which personal narratives can accompany official historical narratives within cultural institutions.

Regardless of the fact that historians ‘author’ historical texts (Munslow, 2012), official historical knowledge is beneficial to understanding the past, through a framework of compiled chronological historical events, places and persons. Although fabricated as a narrative, a constructed historical framework provides a wider socio-historical context which is often vital to grounding first person stories.

Considered treatment of both the official and vernacular narratives is necessary in stitching together these two forms of historicity to successfully link a ‘big narrative’ of a group to the ‘little narrative’ of an individual. This linking is something akin to what Brockmeier (as cited in Kosyaeva et al., 2002) refers to as creating ‘a sense of belonging that binds the individual into a culture while binding the culture into the individual’s mind’ (p. 97). This sounds like the effect of political propaganda I raised earlier, however, it is a natural effect of the two forms of historicity working together. In a sense it is unavoidable, although there are various ways of linking the two forms to produce different results as researched by Kosyaeva, Rowe and Wertsch (2002). Their research was ‘to explore new ways in which the official narrative can be rewritten in light of what formerly underrepresented voices have to say’ (p. 100). Their research implied that when visitors experience visual historical narratives they have a tendency to tag the narratives to their own personal vernacular ones.

It is acknowledging and addressing the power dichotomy and how the two historical forms, vernacular and official, speak to one another, which allows the presentation of both forms as valid, dignified and powerful in their own right (Bodnar, as cited in Kosyaeva et al., 2002, p. 97). When this confluence occurs, personal vernacular narratives can provide deep experiences of public history which serve the public, the institution and history itself, with honesty and respect. The ideal form of public history

which shares ‘beliefs and ideas’ is enacted between the ‘social structures’ as the exchange of views, rather than an institution authoritatively informing its audience of what and how to think about historical matters (Bodnar, as cited in Kosyaeva et al., 2002, 97).

When the relationships between official and vernacular stories and between the people creating and narrating the stories are developed with mutual respect, oral history can function as ‘a history built around people,’ they have the potential to thrust ‘life into history itself’ (Thompson, 2009, p. 23). They have the capacity to widen the scope of history by bringing it into and out of communities where it can bridge understanding between social classes and generations (Thompson, 2009).

Summary

This chapter has explored select literature to outline the development of oral history as a radically new approach to historical production, the concept of ‘intimate public spheres’ as it relates to the universality of personal narratives, the importance of subjectivity and the power plays within historical production. By doing so, I have begun to develop an argument which suggests personal narratives have the capacity to undermine powerful producers of official history, and create affective resonance through universal recognition and intimacy. By juxtaposing the personal voice against an authorial historical voice this chapter has elucidated the value of the former and lays the foundation for more specific aspects of the argument to come to the fore.

Personal narratives have the potential to be ‘sacred and timeless’ through their implicit investigation of small everyday recollections which speak of the universal truths of existence. When these narratives are disseminated in the public sphere they create strong affective intimacy creating ‘juxtapolitical’ narratives, and individual and collective ‘luminosity’ (Berlant, 2008). This personal luminosity is most potent when the individual has a fluent life story to build from.

Foucault argued for historians to recognise the ‘internalisation of discourse’ and that all human experiences exist and are recalled through a prism of that discourse - societal, political and personal (as cited in Abrams, 2010, p. 57). It is through such

prisms that our own life stories are formed - the nuances of who we are in relation to our wider experiences and the political and social world in which we exist and how we form memories of and express those experiences.

As essential to life as reproduction itself, the chronological narrative thread of self and collectivity operates as the life line we hold tightly, guiding us and linking our past with our impending future. Our personal life stories - either comprehensive, rich chronologies or those which are fragmented and interrupted - are a key to our own sense of identity, our ability to make sense of the diverse narratives of others, our connectivity to others and our ability for affective resonance. The following chapter, the second part of the theoretical framework, will explore these ideas in order to build the argument that personal narratives are essential to the development and evolution of individual and collective identities.

Chapter Three

Self and Collective Identity

Introduction

Chapter three presents evidence for the benefits of telling and receiving personal narratives and for the presence of a strong chronological life narrative. This chapter also presents previous exposure to narrative through sharing stories as the foundation for creating affective resonance and understanding of diverse individuals. Similar to the previous chapter on the historical positioning of personal narratives, this chapter explores the relevance and efficacy of personal narratives on an individual and collective level, and the necessary role these narratives play in personal well-being. Where the preceding chapter took a broad view of vernacular narratives within historical production and dissemination, this chapter hones in to explore personal narratives from a psychological perspective, and then broadens focus to discuss their collective impact. The discussion of self-hood, collective identity and the affective capacity of fictionalised autobiographical material provides the basis for the following chapter on how narrative impacts upon our cognitive and neurological responses as they relate to empathy production and the production of meaning.

The way in which we perceive our own lives and those of others in narrative form, both the stories we tell and those we hear, are integral to our sense of self, our abilities to engage in empathic behaviour and consequent altruistic and pro-social behaviour (Fiske, 2008; Keen, 2006). Psychotherapist, Donald Polkinghorne, (1991) states that, ‘When the self is thought of as a narrative or story, rather than a substance or thing, the temporal and dramatic dimension of human existence is emphasized’ (p.135). Therefore it is imperative for mental health that our existence is moulded into a meaningful whole through the process of perceiving and narrating the diverse events of our lives into what Ricoeur (as cited in Polkinghorne, 1991, p.135) calls narrative ‘emplotment’. Once we possess a developed life narrative we can build upon it with various forms of fictional and nonfictional narrative and actual life events in order to

experience deeper affective resonance via future literary and first person narrative (Chiaet, 2013; Keen, 2006; Koopman, 2015; Sklar, 2009).

According to Haven (2007), evolutionary biologists' claim that over 100,000 years of using and telling stories has evolutionarily hard-wired human brains to think in, and prefer story structure in communication. However, although there is uncertainty around whether or not story has a biological purpose, some theorists argue that the evolutionary source of story is: sexual selection rather than Darwinian natural selection, a way to appease our overworked minds, a strategy to unite communities, large and small (Gottschall, 2013), or, like a parable, to provide examples of the perils of an amoral existence (Thompson, 2009). Whatever its purpose, each of these potential rationales resonate strongly with individual and collective identity formation and evolution.

The necessity for a chronological life narrative

Within life narrative, the purpose of remembering and narrating serves a far greater purpose than merely sharing experiences or reciting socio-historical stories. Life story is so fundamental to our existence and our identity formation, that it is 'used as a theoretical model and research method in fields from personality development, clinical psychology to gerontology (Habermas & Bluck, 2000, p. 748).

In the *Journal of Narrative and Life History*, Donald E. Polkinghorne (1991) concisely articulates the construction and importance of life narratives by stating that our own 'cultural stock of stories and myths' create the narrative plot of our identity and self-conception (p. 135). He asserts that it is our unfolding autobiography which constructs our stories of personal identity, however, what makes them different from literary narrative is that our own stories 'incorporate the accidental events and unintended consequences of actions' (p. 135). These unintentional qualities of personal narratives provide a critique on past actions, arming us with a roadmap for more advantageous decision making and outcomes in the future. They are vital not only to the tellers' sense of evolving and strengthening identity, but also to the personal development of recipients of such narratives, as seen in the effects of counterfactual thinking (Goldie, 2009).

Studies of life narrative show the importance of telling, and revisiting or re-evaluating our life stories in order to cognitively develop, and coherently order our personal identity (Habermas & Bluck, 2000). Abrams (2010) argues that an inability to create a life story which links 'events and experiences to each other and to events in the social world' can indicate an 'underdeveloped sense of self or even the existence of a personality disorder' (p. 38). Psychotherapist Michele Crossley (as cited in Gottschall, 2013) believes that depression frequently stems from an 'incoherent story', or an 'inadequate narrative account of oneself' (p. 175).

In an attempt to stave off collegial criticism regarding the use of autobiography in her own writing, New Zealand novelist and journalist Charlotte Grimshaw (2015) reinforces its importance by discussing neuroscientist Marc Lewis' research into high suicide rates among native communities in Western Canada. Researchers discovered that many youths from the communities with high suicide rates were unable to formulate coherent life narratives. Grimshaw (2015) asserts that because they had no sense of their own past they could not see the future. She suggests that rather than grasping the immediate and experiencing despair, if the self is firmly located within a narrative context of past, present and future, there is hope.

Possessing a sense of personal history in a coherent, chronological form is like a lifeline to one's future. Writers and researchers from a range of disciplines agree that life stories are the building blocks upon which we define ourselves in relation to the world around us (Gottschall, 2013; Polkinghorne, 1991). In order to create a coherent identity and subsequent understanding of others and empathic engagement a strong coherent life narrative is necessary. Without these strong narratives defining ourselves and making meaning of our place in the wider world it is possible that 'under stressful conditions, a self-narrative may decompose, producing the anxiety and depression of meaninglessness' (Polkinghorne, 1991, p. 135). Life narrative is akin to Darwin's 'natural selection' theory which works on consciousness - you either have the opportunity, by force of nature or nurture, to develop a strong coherent self-narrative, or extinction of your kind may be inevitable.

‘Anti-tradition’ and the narrated self

Currently, capitalism and ‘neoliberalism’ (Berlant, 2011) are the driving forces of contemporary identification, strongly influencing our individual and communal sense of belonging. Reinforced by fellow theologian Carl Trueman (1998), Mary Hess (2012) writes that our current commercial state of ‘anti-tradition’ is ‘not liberating but is in fact vacuous and devoid of history and its abilities to help us ‘remember’, ‘make’ and ‘attend’” (p. 408). These traditions have, in many respects become foreign to us - they have been usurped by media representations of normative culture and narratives which attempt to shape us rather than reflect our own narratives which provide us with the tools to rediscover ourselves and others in order to ‘flourish’ (Berlant, 2008). As digital storytelling advocate Hess (2012) argues, ‘Much commercial media supports dehumanization and objectification’ and that through learning to tell and disseminate our own stories can open up and extend our ‘zones of intimacy’ (p. 143).

If our sense of identity cannot survive spiritually or emotionally without extending these ‘zones of intimacy’, our existence in a world of ‘massive’ and ‘pervasive’ marginality (de Certeau, 1984) is potentially more precarious than ever. The presiding symptom of ‘anti-tradition’ is the acute feeling of marginality which has a deep and direct effect upon the ability for the self to flourish. In turn, if the self is unable to flourish neither are our empathic feelings and responses.

Often aligned with marginality, oral history has historically been used to provide a voice for the underrepresented - to plug the hole of ‘anti-tradition’. This pervasive universal phenomena of ‘the silent majority’ (de Certeau, 1984): the poor, socially outcast, disabled and sexual and racial minorities, are situated at unreachable distances from normative images of white, middle class youth. Marginality creates a vulnerability or threat to existence; if not death itself, the threat of loss, existent loss or loss of something which we never possessed. This can be tangible or intangible loss: place, people, dignity, social status, ‘normalcy’. In a sense, storytelling immortalises our experiences and restores our losses, as it did for the post-war Modernists and Existentialists.

Literary fiction, autobiography and affect

Before the nineteenth century people did not place themselves at the centre of narratives the way they do today. Rather than being the protagonist within their narratives they did not exist outside or against others but were players in the communal workings of everyday life, existing ‘in an inter-dependent existence’ (Abrams, 2010, p. 37). The first person narrative was both the tool to create collective identity and the glue which formed shared identity. On an individual level these narratives provided universality and were an integral strategy for feeling part of a collective - the concept of an ‘intimate public sphere’ (Berlant, 2008) was unnecessary, as the feeling of collective affect existed organically within the framework and fabric of society. The framework, formed by our roles as ‘artisans’ and ‘craftspeople’ allowed for local and regional communications (Benjamin, 1936).

In his seminal text *The Storyteller* (1936), Benjamin wrote that the death of tradition and the incommunicability of experience put narrative storytelling under threat. Despite its enduring ability for affective resonance, according to Benjamin (1936), the ability to narrate our own lives was compromised, and denied due to our changing roles in society and our changing perceptions of death, crystallised by the devastation of the First World War. Analogous to what Manney (2008) calls our current ‘accelerating future’, Benjamin (1936) wrote that post-war technological advances which brought in mass media and mechanical warfare, increased anxiety and the ability to discuss the past in the context of a foreign present and uncertain future.

If ‘anti-tradition’ (war, death of tradition, technology, consumerism) and the incommunicability of experience render personal histories irrelevant, what genres and strategies exist to form and project our narratives in order to become human beings alive with agency and affect? English Literature professor and critic Arnold Weinstein (2007) asks the question: ‘How do we find out who we are, beyond the résumé and the photographs? How do we delineate the insides, the ‘heart, soul, spirit, self’? (p. 3). He asserts that we know that inside us there is an internal history, ‘a trajectory that eludes calendars and check-ups, a sort of longitudinal string or chain of events and memories or people we’ve known and people we’ve been’ (p. 3).

According to Weinstein (2007), 'Language is the instrument for going *in*, for chronicling and choreographing that huge realm of feeling of consciousness of memory and fantasy, that is 'one's ultimate real estate' (p. 6). In his book *Recovering Your Story: Proust, Joyce, Woolf, Faulkner, Morrison*, Weinstein (2007) explores the reader's discovery of their own internal worlds through depictions of the inner-self within literary fiction, predominantly literary modernism. Weinstein (2007) asserts that modernist authors provided readers this rare element of going '*in*'.

Nietzsche's theory that 'all manuscripts of a certain author present his autobiography' (as cited in van Stralen 2005, p. 145) is certainly true of many modernist authors such as Virginia Woolf, Marcel Proust, Ernest Hemingway and New Zealand's Katherine Mansfield. As well as a backlash against the rise of the bourgeois, continued mechanisation and industrialisation, and the disenfranchisement of Europe after World War One, the Modernists employed their knowledge of self and acute observations of modernity to depict the actuality of life - the 'moments of being' as Virginia Woolf would call them. In 1929 in her ground-breaking stream of consciousness work, *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf (1929) wrote, 'Fiction is like a spider's web, attached ever so lightly perhaps, but still attached to life at all four corners' (p. 35).

Suzette Henke (as cited in Ammary, 2016) writes that 'scripto-therapy', where traumatic experiences create literature - a form most well known in the work of Modernist Ernest Hemingway - possesses an 'explicitly healing function' (p. 206). She says that 'as a genre, life writing encourages the author/narrator to reassess his/her past and to reinterpret the intertextual codes inscribed on personal consciousness by society and culture' (Henke, as cited in Ammary, 2016, p. 206). Literary 'scripto-therapy' is analogous to the concept of reader 'catharsis' through narrative reflection. The concept is important in the consideration of how affect within the production of autobiographically based literature becomes a contagion for readers.

The universal themes of gender, prejudice, pain and status explored by the Modernists continue to strike a chord of recognition with readers - particularly during times of strong feelings of 'anti-tradition' or pervasive marginalisation. Weinstein (2007) advocates that it is because authors like Woolf wrote 'life stories' within the guise of 'fiction' that their works will not 'stale and wither' and that they are able to assist us

with ‘uncovering our story’ as a result (p. 16). Van Stralen (2005) wrote of the Existentialist use of autobiography that: ‘Fictionality does not imply the exploration of possible worlds of experimentation with language, but a discursive conversion of the personal and social situation which should move and activate the reader’ (p. 143).

In a sense, the experimental literature of the Modernists and the Existentialists rejected their ‘outsider status’ by presenting the inner experience of the masses who felt emotionally bankrupt as a result of the ‘anti-tradition’ of their age. The Modernists’ response can be paralleled to the current use of first person narratives in creating belonging for the ‘silent majority’ (de Certeau, 1984) of the technology generation. The self is tethered to the collective by enhancing civic belonging through small world first person narrative.

Before the proliferation of oral histories in the 1960s, and as a way of expressing grief and the disenfranchisement of modernity, modernist authors utilised autobiography disseminated in the ‘guise of fiction’ to express their own feelings and to draw out the inner complexities of their readers (Weinstein, 2007). Modernism’s role in producing affective resonance was primarily driven by its ability to provide refuge in the recognition of universal themes and emotions.

Listening to the stories of others

Life stories are not only the basis for mental stability and resilience but are also vital to the development of affective social and familial relationships, and the development of empathy and understanding between individuals. Furthermore, in terms of our depth of understanding of others and how we redefine and reassess our own identity, it is the stories of others and the stories others tell about us which have a profound effect on our own development.

In 1938, Harvard University Health Services began an investigation into the lives of 700 men. Known as the Grant Study, it is the most comprehensive study conducted on longevity, well-being and more specifically, happiness. Thus far, researchers conclude that it is the building of strong communicative relationships above all else that produces not only happiness but longevity. Regardless of IQ, income or profession, in order to live a happy life and remain mentally well we require communication which

renders us satiated cognitively and emotionally. The term used for the quality of these relationships on a more general level is 'warmth'. 'Warmth' is what is created when two humans come together and find common ground, collective affect and understanding. Through developing warmth we have a stronger sense of self and identity and according to the Grant Study, this has huge implications in terms of longevity, life satisfaction, income and even lifetime sexual satisfaction (McKay, 2014).

One of the most relevant aspects of this research, is that the way in which parents narrated their sons achievements had a huge impact on the boys' sense of identity and worth as adults. It appears that boys whose mothers boasted about or celebrated their sons' rough and tumble behaviour, were more likely to achieve higher scores on what the Grant Study called the 'Decathlon of Flourishing' (McKay, 2014). The latter suggests that the way we narrate the lives of others, particularly those close to us, has the capacity to shape their identity, indicating not only the importance of the kind of pastoral care that we provide one another but also of the importance of sharing positive stories with one another and about one another. It is the positive sharing of life and language, that provides this buffer from depression and illness. In short, these narratives are integral to the flourishing of a strong identity (McKay, 2014) illustrating that our sense of self is not only constructed from 'within and in relation to our social and cultural environment' (Abrams, 2010, p. 36), but is also 'mediated through a series of discourses' as seen here as a construction early on by parents. This example reinforces Abrams' (2010) assertion that the self is a cultural constitution which is driven by linguistic expression as the product of narrative.

The advantage and possible purpose of positioning ourselves or our loved ones at the center of our narratives is to reinforce the protagonist status. Our desire to put ourselves at the center of our narrative serves an important evolutionary purpose through the process of our memories being 'pruned and shaped by an ego-enhancing bias that blurs the edges of past events' and 'softens culpability', essentially distorting what really happened (Tavris & Aronson as cited in Gottschall, 2013, p. 170). As the Grant Study illustrates, this subjectivity and placing yourself and your loved ones as protagonists serves the evolutionary purpose of stability and personal well-being (McKay, 2014).

Protagonist status and subjectivity

According to Abrams (2010), in the 1990s the subjectivity of ‘memory, with all its imperfections, mutability and transience’ became a positive aspect of the personal narrative which provided oral historians a certain counter-charge to the argument that oral histories were not considered to be valid or ‘objective’ (p. 23). One of the reasons for our inability to tell objective narratives is the presence of what Freud called ‘our ideal self or ego-ideal’, this being the ideal self we wish to present to the world. However, Abrams (2010) says that this subjectivity is the ‘bread and butter of oral history’, and that although subjectivity is not unique to oral history it is one of the gifts of the process as ‘the oral historian is not just looking for ‘facts’ for her or his work but is looking to detect the emotional responses, the political views and the very subjectivity of human existence’ (p. 22).

Essentially, our narratives are moulded and massaged by our own critical understanding of what we thought we did, what we wanted to do and what we believed we were doing (Portelli, as cited in Abrams, 2010). This reflection and articulation of memory benefits our own future behaviour and the recipients of these narratives. In addition to reinforcing or fabricating the aforementioned protagonist status, disseminating narratives which present critical thinking about past decisions, or present potentially different endings, are hugely beneficial to the recipients of those narratives - these stories or legends allow for evolution of decision making through reflection upon the past.

Learning from the stories, mistakes and the counterfactual thinking of others

Through their subjectivity, personal narratives become, like legends, essential for cultural evolution. Or as Shuman (2005) says, ‘The small world story could be considered an everyday correlate to the fairy tale; they share some structural characteristics, and both refer to fate’ (p. 93). De Certeau (1984) writes that ‘whereas historiography recounts in the past tense the strategies of instituted powers, these ‘fabulous’ stories offer their audience a repertory of tactics for future use’ (de Certeau, 1984, p. 24).

Similar to Berlant’s (2008) theory of an *intimate public sphere*, de Certeau (1984) states it is the depiction of the everyday and the rising up of the anti-hero which allows

human connections to these ‘historical forces’ due to the inevitable driving universality of everyday events entwined within them. Where the power structures detract from our ‘everyday’ experiences being represented as meaningful, the stories of legend, similar to personal stories, provide counterfactual thinking to use and to find meaning within. Indeed the ‘repertory of tactics for future use’ (de Certeau, 1984) is powerful when utilised effectively, makes up, to a certain degree, the rationale behind our cultural evolution - hence the absolute necessity of everyday narratives of personal struggle, observation, success and failure.

British academic, philosopher and writer on ethics and aesthetics, Peter Goldie (2009) argues that counterfactual thinking, where remembering a crucial moment of an event and thinking of potentially more advantageous outcomes which results in feelings of regret, can provide a foundation for better decision making for both the teller and the listener (p. 100).

Goldie (2009) claims the technique of counterfactual thinking is used to assist with planning, making better choices, and learning from our mistakes. Goldie (2009) says that this type of narrative thinking which arises naturally at times of regret helps us make ‘new reflectively endorsed self-governing policies’ allowing us to see ‘ourselves as agents who persist over time’ (p. 104).

Part of this agency not only exists through reflecting on our own stories but through exposure to and learning from the stories of others and literary forms of all kinds: fiction, biography and autobiography featuring counterfactual narrative. They allow us to see the humanity in others, to see that we all have regrets and that we can learn from our own mistakes and those of others (Goldie, 2009). This is where first person narratives have the potential to usurp the constructs and subsequent effect of fictional literature, to present what fiction, recounted chronological history or historical fiction fail to deliver. They provide the opportunity for narrators to express their perceptions of an event or situation to powerful effect by being able to ‘see’ and experience the world in a deeper less myopic way - like a book with multiple endings, the listener uses their own moral code to navigate their way through, with the hindsight of the narrator. These revelations can bring Berlant’s (2008) theory of the ‘intimate public’

to a new level of collectivity and subsequent ‘civic idea of compassion’ (Berlant, 2008). An ‘intimate public’ of those who regret, who do not feel ‘luminous’.

An illustrative example of counterfactual thinking and the role of narrative reflection in empathy production and future decision making is the famous quote delivered by Robert Oppenheimer, the former technical director of the Manhattan Project, producer of the atomic bomb. In an interview about the Trinity explosion, Oppenheimer admitted that after witnessing the first successful nuclear test on July 16, 1945, that the quote: ‘Now I am become death, the destroyer of worlds’, from the Hindu scripture Bhagavad-Gita entered his mind. This revelation about his role in this dark and enduring historical decision and the deep public regret he voiced repeatedly until his death in 1967 was then, and remains, a warning to humanity about the perils of disregarding future outcomes (Oppenheimer, 1965).

Goldie (2009) asserts that the characters in literary narratives are not like us, in that within fiction ‘heroes rarely have any indication of cowardice within the recounted action or in their presumed past’ (p. 105). This provides a stronger case for recipients of subjective yet truthful nonfiction personal narratives and the ability to reflect upon a counterfactual narrative as being arresting and affecting, and most importantly relevant and helpful to the lives of the audience.

Summary

This chapter focused on the individual necessity for autobiography and how it is utilised in the literary world which has allowed a flourishing of affective resonance. Without the ability to transform our daily experiences into narrative employment, via literary ‘scripto-therapy’ or through forming coherent life narratives, our mental well-being is likely to deteriorate.

Furthermore, a coherent life story which is further bolstered by the stories others tell about us, can render us luminous, with ‘juxtapolitical’ narratives acting as a buffer to the damaging effects of marginalisation and pervasive states of ‘anti-tradition’. This chapter further reinforces the argument that the stories we tell about ourselves and the world not only influence subsequent experiences, but enrich our self-perception,

identity and our abilities to empathise while also influencing our understanding of the historical world and our place in it.

Vernacular narratives have a key role, through their often universal themes, in expanding and strengthening our connectedness to the world beyond a limited parochial view, assisting with understanding the universality of human experiences. This chapter has presented an interpretation of the literature which illustrates that first person narratives feed and strengthen our psychological well-being providing resilience, and the stories of others - in literary, fictional or first-person form - provide reinforcement to that psychological well-being. Furthermore, these diverse narratives which enter our sphere allow us to both validate and/or reassess our life narrative leading to a deeper understanding of ourselves and others and they also make us feel part of something greater than ourselves, an 'intimate public sphere'.

A secondary, yet highly important and globally beneficial outcome of recognising yourself in the stories of others is a sense of empathic engagement which has the potential for altruistic pro-social behaviour. The following chapter provides a theoretical framework for narrative empathy and the neurological foundation for affect as a response to narrative. Narratives, both literary and first person, have a resounding capacity for providing the channels to creatively imagine oneself in the place of others generated by empathic engagement. Most psychologists agree that empathy is both affective (emotion/feeling) and cognitive (thinking) and that the two are required to work in tandem to generate deep levels of empathy (Keen, 2006).

The cognitive and neurological aspects of responsive empathy to storytelling and listening have been written about extensively since the discovery of the neurological link to empathy 20 years ago (Gallese, 2011; Gallese et al., 2011). The following chapter examines the budding discipline of neurohumanism which probes the juncture between narrative and neuroscience leading to some interesting conclusions about the role of narrative in empathy and subsequent pro-social behaviour. In order to create better 'selves' and communal connectivity, narrative has an important, if not essential, role to play in empathy building, both cognitively and neurologically.

Chapter Four

Narrative Empathy

Introduction

This chapter aims to elucidate the role of literary fiction and first person narratives in empathic engagement as they relate to: personal characteristics, disarming naturally occurring xenophobia and its role in pro-social behaviour, and our neurological predisposition for understanding and empathy. As there is little research specifically focused on first person vernacular stories I have drawn primarily from theories of narrative empathy as it relates to literary fiction and neuroscience. The chapter aims to clarify the process of empathic engagement and subsequent altruism, both cognitively and neurologically, occurring as a byproduct of narrative exposure, fictional and experienced. Where the previous chapter demonstrated the capacity for autobiography within literary fiction to assist with finding our 'inner selves', this chapter develops the argument for autobiographical stories as a driver of affective resonance and empathy and its role in pro-social behaviour.

Neuroscientists and narrative theorists agree that our emotional responses to both fiction and nonfiction narratives are the result of many factors: existing mental well-being, previous exposure to narrative, pre-existing values, recognition of the characters, the way in which the narrative is communicated and the level of emotion present in the telling (Gallese, 2011; Gallese et al., 2011; Keen, 2006; Koopman, 2015; Manney, 2008; Sklar, 2009; Van Stralen, 2005; Weinstein, 2007). Digital storytelling advocate Anna Poletti (2011) states that these personal 'texts focused on affective connections with the audience, contribute to the prevalence of intimacy and affect in the construction of contemporary citizenship' (p. 73).

Furthermore, neurologically, we are predisposed to feel involuntary physical and emotional embodied responses to narrative. However, the strength at which they present themselves is dependent upon the existing richness of lived experiences and narrative exposure, and their inter-relationship with one another - feeding each other,

in a cyclic cause and effect process. Research suggests that the more narratives we are exposed to, the more developed our empathy-determining neurological pathways become, which in turn opens us up to the desire to further consume and make sense of narrative, both personal and literary. It appears that our personal stories and experiences are fundamental to our understanding of both fictional and real life characters. Additionally, narrative fiction has a similar pendulum type effect upon real-life scenarios where we learn from fiction and apply these lessons to reality and vice versa. Interestingly, resonance frequency, in classical physics, not only requires both internal and external forces in order to exist, but the internal vibrational force creates a much greater energy than the initiating external vibration (Mühlhoff, 2014, p. 1007). The latter can be interpreted as analogous to the powerful individual, collective and pro-social outcomes of the affective resonance of these small world stories (Shuman, 2015; Thompson, 2009).

Information versus narrative

Research suggests that data based information such as ‘expositional writing, plot summary and PowerPoint bullet points’, unlike story-structured narrative do not have the capacity for empathy development or to decrease levels of xenophobia (Mar, as cited in Graves, 2014). There appear to be inherent differences in how we process and emotionally respond to fact based information and narrative structured plot-driven stories which are rich in imagery and description. For better or worse, marketing companies have begun engaging psychologists to assist with making more emotional ‘connections’ with customers by ‘showing’ rather than ‘telling’, in order to more heavily influence their buying compass via their emotions. At an Ogilvy Public Relations session on neuroscience and narrative at the Global Public Relations Summit (2012), Raymond Mar, a psychologist at York University in Toronto said that immersive stories are effective at changing minds, and that the more people ‘feel immersed in a story, the more likely they are to change their beliefs to be more consistent with those expressed in the world of narrative’ (as cited in Graves, 2014).

Whether fiction or nonfiction, it appears that implicit experience or views woven into story structure are more effective than explicit arguments. According to Benjamin (1936) information is merely ‘used to gratify immediate needs’, and while ‘a narrative

can remain timeless, information is only relevant in real time; information is unable to transcend time like a story can nor can it provide wisdom' (p. 365). It is this imparted wisdom which produces counterfactual reflection leading to a deeper understanding of past mistakes and potentially driving attitudinal changes and pro-social decision making (Fiske, 2008; Goldie, 2009; Keen, 2006).

Further to their propensity for immediate affect, Benjamin (as cited in Hall, 2011) advocates for the strength of counsel, and the continuation of discourse on experience, afforded by storytelling. He wrote that 'counsel is less an answer to a question than a proposal concerning the continuation of a story' (Benjamin, as cited in Hall, 2011). Hall (2010) supports Benjamin's theory and writes that 'The integration of the narrative into a person's experience will allow for further permeation of the story, thus allowing more people to unite in a specific experience' (section 4, para 2). Shuman (2005) also states that the appropriation of narratives have multiple beneficial effects. This integration and layering of narrative is vital for the evolution of empathy and its subsequent use.

The role of personal characteristics in empathic responses to literary fiction

Although there is scant research on the direct effect of personal narratives in terms of their affect building capacities, many contemporary narrative theorists (Gallese et al., 2011; Keen, 2006; Koopman, 2015; Manney, 2008; Sklar, 2009; Van Stralen, 2005; Weinstein, 2007) have explored the scientific and humanitarian connections between literary narrative and real life experience and its impact upon empathy. The latter research can be used as a basis to investigate first person narratives' role in empathy production.

Whitenton (2016) argues that our brains do not seem to distinguish between real and the fictional stories with regard to 'information processing and influence', it is our 'shared experiential medium that allows stories to subtly change a person's perspective' (p. 93). Allbright (as cited in Manney, 2008) writes that 'We must always be aware that the emotional response we get from our empathy is from our own evolutionarily (both culturally and genetically) derived values' (p. 53). This interweaving of reality with fiction as a tool to deepen our understanding illustrates

the essential role first person narratives have on our general understanding of narrative and our empathy for characters both real and fictitious.

Lecturer in Modern Languages, Harold Sklar (2009), one of the few academics to have written about the similarities between cognitive responses to fiction and real life narrative, says that, the ‘experiential component of reading, in turn, seems particularly relevant to the discussion of the real-fictional dichotomy’ (section 1, para. 4). He continues by stating that both fiction and nonfictional narratives utilise experiences and understanding of people in real life to construct settings, imagine motives and conclusions and all of the other ‘creative dimensions of the reading process’ (Sklar, 2009, section 1, para. 4). Authors such as Linnér, Harvey, Robert Alter, Frank Palmer (as cited in Sklar, 2009) among others agree that our sense of engagement with literary characters is due to their similarity with real people.

Sklar (2009) believes that our experiences of fictional characters and of real people, apart from close friends and family, are generally fragmentary and incomplete. He suggests that in order to develop a mental image of a full human being rather than a mere ‘sketch’ of a real life person we ‘fill in the gaps through intuition and knowledge’ provided by our existing real life experiences. Sklar’s (2009) belief reinforces the neurohumanistic perspective that ‘our understanding of linguistic expression is not solely an epistemic attitude; it is a way of being’ (Gallese et al., 2011, p. 198). Therefore, the degree to which we understand and make meaning from the daily deluge of large and small narratives is deeply rooted within our capacity to utilise our own life narratives, ‘real world’ experiences, our values and our existing cache of real and fictional narratives. Furthermore, it appears that we carry the lessons we learn from fictional narrative into real life situations (Iser as cited in Sklar, 2009; Koopman, 2015; Keen, 2006).

Narratologist Eva Koopman (2015) also suggests that personal factors are what drive empathic responses to narratives. She writes that empathic understanding can be ‘predicted by trait empathy, exposure to literature, and sympathy / empathy with the character’, and that when gauging empathic responses to literature it is important to

look at readers' personal characteristics for clues to their level of empathy and understanding of characters (p. 63).

In Julian Barnes autobiographical novel *Levels of Life* (2013), in which he tracks the grief of losing his wife to cancer he writes about his new found love of opera which emerged after his wife's death. Previously he had experienced opera as 'deeply implausible', 'with characters yelling in one another's faces simultaneously' (p. 91), however after the trauma of losing his wife he wrote, that 'in the darkness of an auditorium and the darkness of grief, the form's implausibility suddenly dissolved' (p. 91). Through this new lens of grief, the experience of a previously incomprehensible art form had become his 'new social realism' (p. 91). Its mirroring of his personal experience, through its fictionalised 'violent, overwhelming, hysterical and destructive emotion' (p. 92), created a more acute understanding of the narrative and the form itself.

Confirming Koopman (2015) and Sklar's (2009) theories is the neurological discovery that the same area of our brains engage and activate for the recall of both false or fictional events and real life experiential events which in turn assist with future decision making (Schacter, as cited in Haven, 2007, p. 68). Furthermore, human memory circuits do not have the capacity to distinguish between a real and false memory, which instead is left to the conscious mind to determine (Schacter, as cited in Haven, 2007, p. 68). The latter is supported by Iser's (as cited in Sklar, 2009) narratological perspective, that 'reading has the same structure as experience' and that the two entangle and interact to make meaning from the present text (section 1, para. 18). In addition to this, through repeated exposure to literature and the personal narratives of others' both familiar and from different backgrounds, the better our ability to empathise with both literary and real world characters (Koopman, 2015).

The role of literary fiction in the development of real world understanding

According to narrative theory our understanding of human nature, gleaned from characters in literary fiction, is utilised to draw conclusions, make assumptions and make decisions about real people in our own lives (Chiaet, 2013). The ability to do this is based on the fact that literary fiction as opposed to popular fiction or information in its raw state, focuses more heavily on character relationships and psychology

forcing us to fill in the gaps in order to find meaning and to understand their intentions and motivations. The latter works to disrupt readers expectations, which are more easily fulfilled in popular fiction, and undermines prejudices and stereotypes' (Koopman, 2015, p. 32). It is the 'introspective dialogues' of characters which the reader imagines which makes literary fiction powerful in its affective qualities (Chiaet, 2013).

Chiate (2013) inverts Sklar's (2009) theory, asserting that the psychological awareness developed through literature is projected into the real world and assists us with making sense of the diverse complicated characters in real life. Chiaet's (2013) interpretation presents a pendulum effect, similar to Mühlhoff's (2014) theory of the diachronic and layering evolution of affective resonance, whereby the more you read the more you can understand human nature, and the depths to which you understand the complexity of reality assist with character and event relatability when reading or listening to narratives.

This process of activating affective resonance and its ongoing effect could be likened to Deleuze' idea of 'brute eruption' or the process of 'actualisation' where there is a 'leap' from non-existence to existence in understanding (as cited in Mühlhoff, 2014, p. 1012). In this case, the narrative is what propels the 'brute eruption' and allows for the great existence of understanding and affect. Or in the case of Barnes' appreciation for opera, the death of his wife was the point of 'brute eruption' at which opera existed as a relatable artform. Mühlhoff (2014) believes that a state of 'being-in-resonance' becomes historically 'sedimented', meaning that over time the emotion of affective resonance is modulated, affecting future relations (p. 1013). Mühlhoff (2014) argues that resonance is 'not only in a synchronic sense inherent to the relations' themselves, but that they are also 'diachronically shaped, as a product of the past of the resonance process itself, thus co-shaping its future unfolding' (p. 1013). Therefore, just as the acts of experiencing, reading and listening work to activate latent feelings of empathy, according to Mühlhoff, our propensity for resonance is undergoing the same creation and reinforcement, which overtime, essentially strengthens our ability for affective feeling.

The affective qualities of first person dialogue

As previously discussed, personal experiences and the accompanying emotions are frequently inserted into literary fiction, but there are a small set of techniques employed by authors, as identified by narrative theorists, novel critics, and reading specialists, which stimulate empathy and a deeper understanding of characters (Keen, 2006). Keen (2006) suggests that ‘first person fiction more readily evokes feeling responsiveness than the whole variety of third person narrative situations’ (p. 215). This focus on first person narrative implies that readers feel a closer emotional and psychological connection when they believe they are reading a conversation based in reality, rather than from a removed narrator.

According to Keen (2006), the use of ‘first person narration and the interior representation of characters’ consciousness and emotional states as devices supporting character identification’ can contribute ‘to empathetic experiences, opening readers’ minds to others, changing attitudes, and even predisposing readers to altruism’ (p. 213). The capacity for real-world pro-social behaviour as a byproduct of narrative, both fictional and real, is possibly its greatest asset. Although empathy is a valuable trait in itself it can only be a functional humanitarian tool if it is put into action via altruism or pro-social behaviour.

Personal narrative as generator of humility and pro-social behaviour

According to Tania Singer (as cited in Jones, 2016) research indicates that it is possible to block our natural capacity for feeling empathy if we perceive someone’s actions as ‘unfair’ or if they do not belong to ‘our tribe’. Therefore, characters in literary fiction play a vital role in teaching us about humility and understanding for those who are different from ourselves (Chiaet, 2013). Fictional and first person narratives allow a breaking down of stereotypes and prejudice, as well as government imposed or media agenda-driven narratives (Havel as cited in Barme et al., 2006; Manney, 2008). When governments ‘impose divisions between peoples and their stories, it marks the beginning of a corruption of shared humanity, which *Guardian* columnist and political activist Owen Jones (2016) suggests is undeniably ‘at the heart of injustice’. The role of storytelling in exploring and encouraging this shared humanity can not be underestimated, particularly its role in ameliorating our fear of ‘otherness’ (Keen, 2006; Manney 2008).

When we speak about others with dignity and respect and allow them to tell their own stories, the benefits have society changing potential. Narrative theorist Suzanne Keen (2006) writes that:

Social and developmental psychologists, philosophers of virtue ethics, feminist advocates of an ethic of caring, and many defenders of the humanities believe that empathy emotion motivates altruistic action, resulting in less aggression, less fickle helping, less blaming of victims for their misfortunes, increased cooperation in conflict situations, and improved actions on behalf of needy individuals and members of stigmatised groups (p. 255).

In October 2016, Jones authored a *Guardian* column about empathy loss and prejudice as it relates to the current refugee crisis. He reminds his readership of a momentary shift in attitudes toward refugees which occurred after media coverage of the death of a Syrian boy of Kurdish ethnic background, Alan Kurdi, who was washed up dead on a Turkish beach. The news was personalised by providing the boy's name and basic details of his life and made refugees 'human-beings again: like the kids playing football on your street' (para. 10). Humanising 'the feared other', in this case communicating the universality of our desire to protect children, comes from telling the stories of the everyday. By providing a narrative about Alan, as short as it was, made him one of our own 'tribe', we cared about him and his people which could in turn result in; 'less blaming', 'increased cooperation', 'improved action' and 'less fickle helping' (Keen, 2006). This example, firstly, illustrates how dehumanising, or not presenting an individual reality through storytelling can create xenophobia with devastating effects, and secondly, it presents how simple personal narratives have a far deeper effect upon us and our subsequent attitudes and behaviour than informational statistics.

Attempting to understand those we view as foreign, feared or 'unworthy', is imperative to the development of empathy between groups who are separated by religion, race or political beliefs. Based on interviews with residents of Louisiana, a Republican

stronghold, Sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild (2016) spent five years listening to the inner world of ‘silenced’ communities who are often seen as the perpetrators of racial segregation and far right attitudes. In *Strangers in Their Own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right* (2016), Hochschild’s ethnographic research presents, through first person interviews, the depths of the American reality in one of the poorest, least educated, most conservative, and most racially divided states in America. As Thompson (2009) wrote, personal narratives create a holistic view of history, making for ‘fuller human beings’ (p. 12). Hochschild (2016) believes that empathy, although often derided, ‘enables you to do your thinking with more understanding’, adding to this, ‘feelings and empathy open up a deeper level of thinking’ (as cited in Smith, 2016). Hochschild (as cited in Smith, 2016) said that her subjects viewed Donald Trump, after initial reservation, as a ‘hero’, because ‘he spoke to their ‘deep story’. If our emotional and psychological well-being is the result of our ‘deep story’, which goads our decision making and political beliefs (Hochschild as cited in Smith, 2016), understanding and empathising with the stories of others is highly advantageous for future global humanity and pro-social behaviour at all levels of society.

Within inter-familial relationships the maintenance of understanding and empathy is also of vital importance. Dr. Albert Rizzo (as cited in Manney, 2008), firstly assisted American Iraq war veterans through a process of virtual storytelling therapy to gain control over their bodies and minds, and now he is focusing on assisting the families and friends of veterans before their loved ones return from combat. Where veterans have suffered psychiatric disorders and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder it is imperative that those close to them can understand the social and behavioural difficulties of returning home. Virtual reality storytelling through artificial intelligence systems are the most effective way to help veterans and their families adjust. Realistic stories of ‘challenging real-life scenarios’, told by the families will form an interactive, virtual environment that will help transport users into another world, essentially putting families in the shoes of their loved ones (Manney, 2008). It is this notion of ‘transporting’ a person into the life of another through narrative, which I will discuss further in the Discussion and Analysis chapter, which is the key to empathy building.

Reinforcing nonfiction’s strength in propagating universal recognition and affective resonance, Manney (2008) describes public affect and attitudinal changes to Iraqi and

American soldiers, as a result of unsanctioned blogs. She suggests that if we were ‘designed to be touched only by our tribe and not by Dickens’ orphans’’, then we are not ‘meant to be touched by the American G.I. stuck in Iraq’ (para. 31). Manney (2008) continues by stating that ‘both just want to be united in a safe place with those they love. And we relate to them as our mirror neurons fire and burn a highway of empathy along our cortex for them and others like them’ (Manney, 2008, para. 31).

One of the strongest generators of empathy, deconstructing xenophobia and creating pro-social behaviour is what Thompson (2009) calls the ‘intimate and moving human presence’ and deeper knowledge of diversity afforded by personal narratives (p. 93). This is partly due to the capacity of first person storytelling to ‘articulate the relationships between personal experiences of structural social and political inequalities’, given their ‘narrative emphasis on closure, affect and universality’ (Poletti, 2011, p. 73).

As an empathy generator, narrative storytelling has expansive pro-social benefits beyond merely understanding and acceptance. Princeton University Professor of Psychology Susan Fiske (as cited in Cohen 2013, p. 157) specialises in understanding and finding ways to disarm prejudice and stereotypes, and found that most people, when asked, were willing to sacrifice a member of their own in-group to save five homeless or poor people. However, it was revealed through lower fMRI imaging activation in their medial prefrontal cortex (the area of the brain that assists with social moderation) that this was only the case when they looked at images of people from their own socio-economic position. This indicates that we have an overriding preference for our own ‘in-group’. Although, ‘asking participants to consider whether the person in the picture would like a certain type of vegetable - and therefore asking them to step into the pictured person’s mind - erases the disparity in medial prefrontal cortex activation in fMRI readings’ (Fiske, as cited in Cohen 2013, p. 157). This response, driven only by asking about vegetable consumption, illustrates that when we have a developing knowledge of the person - or the beginnings of an understanding of their personal story of self - we are more empathic and have greater feelings of empathy toward them. Cohen (2013) says that what ‘Fiske has shown is that we are tacitly educating ourselves, with tremendous consequences, every time we engage with the world’ (p. 158). Fiske (2008) says her research presents a picture of how we

can develop awareness around how segregation and prejudices perpetuate themselves (as cited in Cohen 2013, p. 157) and that through desegregation - storytelling, creating opportunities for people to work and play together - we feel less fear for those who are different to us and over time may develop empathic feelings and possibly undertake pro-social behaviours toward them.

In an age where some live in 'fear of an empathyless planet' (Manney, 2008), exposure to narratives of diversity and affect are essential to our future well-being, both individually and collectively, however, it is reassuring to know that we each possess a neurological capacity for empathy which is primed for receiving and involuntarily responding to narrative stimuli. Additionally, similar to the cyclic relationship between literary fiction and autobiography as affect building, the more stories we experience the greater our neurological reaction.

Neurohumanism - The science of narrative empathy

Emotion and empathy are essential to our understanding of and response to narrative, however, as Jeffrey Pence (2004) says 'this dimension of feeling's relation to narrative has often been treated as something of an embarrassment by critics' (p. 273). He points out that these emotional responses have often been seen as 'less rational and mature than other responses, and hence traditionally associated with "lesser" sorts of readers (children, women, the working class, etc.)' (p. 273).

The emerging field of neurohumanism draws upon neuroscience and twentieth and twenty-first century literary studies to create new models for the study of both visual and verbal texts on individual and collective respondents emotion and embodiment (Gallese et al., 2011, p. 3). This research at the intersection of the humanities and science illustrates that the circuitry of our brains work in conversation with our personal experiences and pre-existing values, to come together to create emotional and physical 'readings' and reactions to narratives. The major finding in the field is that our ability for empathic 'co-feelings' for others can be activated by writings and narrative and 'registered within our own bodies' (Gallese et al., 2011, p. 36).

Mirror neurons - ‘The Gandhi Neurons’

In the 1990s Italian neuroscientists discovered *mirror neuron* activation - the neural circuits activated both in a person ‘carrying out actions, expressing emotions, and experiencing sensations, and automatically via a mirror neuron system, in the observer of those actions, emotions, and sensations’ (Gallese, Eagle & Migone, 2007, p. 131). It has been observed in autistic children, identified as having reduced empathic abilities, that they have ‘abnormally low activation in the inferior frontal gyrus pars opercularis’ containing the mirror neuron system (Dapretto, as cited in Manney, 2008). Hence, the lower the mirror neuron activation the higher the social impairment (Dapretto, as cited in Manney, 2008).

This is seen as an extraordinary discovery which transformed the way scientists and those from many other disciplines perceive human emotion and the understanding of our inherent and deeply emotional connectivity to one another via narrative. Manney (2008) asserts that research into mirror neurons illustrates the power and necessity for ‘storytelling and unfamiliar role models’, in the process of ‘vicarious stimulation’ as a motivator for the human brain ‘to reach out and feel for ‘the other’’ (p. 53).

Suzanne Keen (2006) emphasises that ‘for the first time, brain images supporting the long-standing introspective account of empathy have been recorded’ (p. 211), producing ‘a kind of futuristic nostalgia for the power of science to offer us ‘evidence’ of our sentimental and empathic tendencies’ (Cefalu, Kuchar & Reynolds, 2014). Mimicry is also a symptom of the cognitive effects of affective resonance, and similar to mirror neuron activation. Mühlhoff (2014) argues that through an interactive social cognition theory, that affective resonance also has the capacity for more than individual ‘imitation or synchrony’ (p. 1002). Mühlhoff (2014) argues that affective resonance is ‘a *jointly created* dynamic, shaped within the relational interplay’, yet the effect may not be similar in its physical embodiment - it is discrete to the individual (p. 1002).

‘Embodied simulation’ (E.S.) - the embodied effect of narrative

One of the physical manifestations of mirror neuron activation is ‘embodied simulation’ (E.S), which, according to Gallese (2011), is the result of the brain–body system being equipped with a ‘pre-rational, non-introspective process’. ‘Embodied

simulation' and consequent 'feeling of body' phenomena (F.o.B), Gallese (2011) describes as 'a physical, and not simply "mental," experience of the mind, motor intentions, emotions, sensations, and lived experiences of other people, even when narrated' (p. 197). Gallese et. al. (2005) argue that E.S 'constitutes a fundamental functional mechanism for empathy and, more generally, for understanding another's mind' (p. 133). Our ability to empathise with others, feel what they feel, and our ability to function in social contexts, according to social neuroscientist Tania Singer (as cited in Keen, 2006), all contribute to our success and consequent survival. Furthermore, Singer (as cited in Keen, 2006) believes that 'our ability to empathise has evolved from a system for representing our internal bodily states and subjective feeling states' (p. 212).

In terms of the emotional effect that 'embodied simulation' provides, Gallese (2011) says that it is because it generates 'representational content' and that 'the functional mechanism seems to play a major role in our epistemic approach to the world' (p. 143). Similar to narratological theories of empathy, Gallese (2011) asserts that it is our mental state which is able to attribute these emotions to others (p. 197), and that 'the extent and reliability of such reuse and functional attribution depends on the simulator's repertoire and it being shared with the target's repertoire' (p. 197). Therefore in order to have a fully developed experience of 'embodied simulation', many pre-existing and complementary functions must occur both inside the circuitry of the brain and within one's interpersonal experiences. Similar to the character traits determined by narrative theorists as necessary to enhance understanding of fictional characters, this 'simulator's repertoire' (Gallese 2011, p.197) comprises a strong chronological life narrative and exposure to a broad range of real life personal narratives (Chiate, 2013; Koopman, 2015).

'Feeling of body' (F.o.B) phenomena

Empathy is rooted in 'embodied simulation' yet requires a suite of interpersonal abilities to flourish (Gallese, 2011). 'Embodied simulation's' consequent 'feeling of body' phenomena is not to be conceived of as a 'mere sensing of how our body reacts to external stimuli' but as a 'bodily way of making sense of our social world' (Gallese et al, 2011, p. 16). In terms of survival and evolution, an impeded ability to make sense of the world interrupts our ability to create a fluid life story.

By identifying with certain characters and situations, the mirroring mechanism allows for the effects of ‘embodied simulation’ and ‘feeling of body’ to occur (Gallese, 2011). Due to the ‘bodily memories and imaginative associations’ awakened in our minds, we do not need to reflect upon the narrative explicitly, it is a naturally occurring involuntary response of connectivity (Gallese, 2011, p. 199). Life narrative and previous experiences and narrative exposure is necessary to produce these ‘imaginative associations’ essential to involuntarily activate the narrated material.

‘Liberated embodied simulation’

It is generally accepted among literary analysts and neurohumanists, fiction produces stronger ‘embodied simulation’ and ‘feeling of body’ than nonfiction due to what Gallese (2011) calls ‘liberated embodied simulation’. It functions by providing what can be likened to a ‘frame surrounding Cezanne’s painting’ (Gallese, 2011, p. 199), or as de Certeau (1984) says, ‘like a rented room in an apartment’ (p. xxi). Gallese (2011) asserts that is ‘temporary suspension of the factive grip on our daily occupations’ which liberates these ‘new simulative energies’ (p. 199).

Keen’s (2012) narratological research reinforces Gallese’ (2011) theories, suggesting that readers perception of a ‘text’s fictionality plays a role in subsequent empathetic response, by releasing readers’ from the obligations of self-protection through skepticism and suspicion’ (p. 220). Although this may be true, strong empathic feelings, according to Keen (2012) can still be internalised with possible later real-world pro-social behaviour (p. 220).

Summary

The role of narrative empathy crosses the boundary between fiction and reality on both sides of the narrative experience. A cache of nonfiction personal narratives are essential to draw from in order to empathise deeply with fictional and nonfictional characters. Furthermore the resulting felt empathy can be used in later real-world responsiveness.

Many factors are necessary for empathy to flourish. Nonfiction first person narrative may not be the strongest tool to solicit empathy, but exposure to the stories of real life produces a broad range of ‘affect’, one of which is an evolving sense of empathy.

Further substantiating the argument this chapter has revealed how character understanding and empathy feeds back and forth between what we learn from fiction and nonfiction and our real life interactions and experiences. It is both our cognitive experience of narrative and our neurological response, resulting from observation and narrative, which provides the way we empathise and act upon our empathic responses in the real world.

Jones (2016) believes that it is difficult to restore justice as it is ‘relentlessly’ undermined by ‘powerful interests – from media outlets to politicians’. However, Manney (2008) optimistically states that through telling stories, both our own and others’, both fiction and nonfiction, a state of ‘anti-tradition’ can be ameliorated. One important aspect of storytelling which Manney (2008) stresses is that they must ‘come from the heart and must be universal in appeal’ (p. 59). Manney (2008) concludes by recommending that we must ‘spread these stories as pervasively as possible in the multicultural sphere...’ (p. 59). Manney (2008) and Shuman (2005) agree that in order for this to occur we all need to ‘open diverse channels of narrative’ (p. 93). Hochschild (2016), confirms this by saying, ‘we have to reach out’, ‘we need school-to-school crossovers’, ‘we need church-to-church crossovers, union crossovers - people on different sides of the political divide learning to listen, and turning their own moral alarm system off, for a little while’ (as cited in Smith, 2016).

Our cultural and empathic evolution through ‘deep listening and ‘attending’ (Hess, 2012) is key. This chapter adds to the thrust of the argument through revealing that the central cogs which generate affective literary narrative and neurologically generated empathy are often personal narratives. Their direct or indirect ‘fictionalised’ use within a wider range of texts is integral and fundamental to many of our empathic responses to narrative characters. Personal narratives role in producing textured, less myopic and tightly controlled history is paramount to the generation and maintenance of humility, affect and empathy.

In conclusion, Part One of the thesis, the theoretical framework, reveals that through the impetus to share aspects of lived experiences personal narratives possess the ability to empower the speaker and the listener (Abrams, 2010; Thompson, 2009). Expressed by the orator in order to make meaning of the world and specific experiences, for

themselves and others, personal stories connect individuals to one another, assist with identifying confluences, soliciting empathy and seeking narrative reciprocity (Abrams, 2010; Berlant, 2008; Koopman, 2015; Shuman, 2005; Thompson, 2009). As a tool to enrich socio-historical interpretation first person narratives add a dimension of lived authenticity to official historical narratives. Through this authentic experience of vernacular history our understanding of historical narratives is deepened and we simultaneously become agents of history.

‘Intimate public spheres’ (Berlant, 2008) are a product of narrative dissemination and are created when individuals recognise themselves within a diverse range of narratives. Through recognising oneself within a particular narrative individuals begin to identify themselves as part of a collective of individuals who also identify with the same resonant narrative. ‘Intimate public spheres’ can occur as a response to a diverse range of narrative genres and can occur across an infinite number of public and private spaces (Berlant, 2008; Shuman, 2005). An innate human desire to connect with one another and to seek validation and agency drives the continual populating of ‘intimate public spheres’ in real and cyberspace. It is ‘intimate public spheres’ which ameliorate feelings of marginalisation and break down prejudices between diverse individuals; they allow us to see more similarities than differences between fellow humans.

When we listen and respond to narratives a process of self-reflection, narrative integration and self reassessment takes place whereby our sense of ourselves and others is continually shifting and being fine tuned as an inherent consequence of exposure to narrative (Abrams, 2010). Through repeated exposure to narratives of all kind, particularly first person narratives, or those with autobiographical origins (Van Stralen, 2005; Weinstein, 2007), we are continually changing, evolving (Abrams, 2010) and experiencing affective resonance which ebbs and flows over time (Mühlhoff, 2014). Furthermore exposure to diverse narratives produces a cyclic experience whereby meaning making, pro-social behaviours (Keen, 2006; Fiske 2008) and our own narratives work to reinforce one another. The latter speaks to the necessity for personal understanding and agency through the recognition of a universal human experience (Sklar, 2009; Koopman, 2015; Shuman, 2005).

Affective resonance is what occurs these three expressions and responses to narrative come into play. Affective resonance is a cognitive emotional expression arising from, relating to, or influencing feelings or emotion. The state of affective resonance refers to the processes of social interactions, 'whose progression is dynamically shaped in an entanglement of moving, and being-moved, affecting and being-affected' (Mühlhoff, 2014, p. 1001). Affective resonance is produced when stories are shared, when storytelling is reciprocated, when 'intimate public spheres' of affect and recognition are created and when we reshape and redevelop who we are and how we perceive those around us.

The following section, Part Two, will investigate the role of personal narratives in affective resonance as it relates to history and self-reflection, more directly and personally, through a case study. The latter focuses on how listeners respond to personal narratives about the social history of Christchurch's High Street precinct after the Canterbury Earthquakes 2010 - 2012.

PART TWO:

CASE STUDY - *HIGH STREET STORIES*

Chapter Five

Case Study: *High Street Stories*

Introduction

This chapter focuses on providing a description of the storytelling website *High Street Stories* (www.highstreetstories.co.nz) and gives a brief introduction to the research participants. The discussion of the participant responses in relation to the theory will occur in the following Discussion and Analysis chapter. I developed and produced the multi-media website for *Heritage New Zealand* in 2014 as a response to the loss of the High Street Precinct's built heritage after the 2011 - 2012 Canterbury Earthquakes.

Project Context - The Canterbury Earthquakes and the High Street Precinct

In September 2010 and February 2011 the province of Canterbury in the South Island of New Zealand experienced two major earthquakes measuring magnitude 7.1 and 6.3 respectively. These events resulted in the destruction of much of Christchurch's architectural fabric and a palpable decline in the mental well-being of many of its inhabitants.

Between the the 1880s to the 1950s the High Street precinct was a center for light industry, small retailers, stables, and independent fix it shops. In the 1970s it became the unofficial 'red light' district and home to alternative and independent retailers - record stores, artist and band studios, and antique dealers. In the 1980s it was abandoned for the satellite suburban mall culture which Christchurch policy makers favoured. As a result the High Street precinct became, 'like a war zone and nobody bothered to clean up' (Stewart, 2013). In the mid-2000s visionary developers restored the laneways and Victorian and Edwardian streetscapes and with the help of the Christchurch City Council the area became a hub of innovative independent businesses and nightlife. Christchurch's younger residents discovered the pleasure of the heritage aesthetic and the older residents rediscovered a part of the city lost to the commercialised mall culture.



Figure 1. 141-149 Manchester Street, Christchurch, 2011. Photo: Becker Fraser Photos

The earthquakes resulted in a disfigurement of the city which forced the citizens of Christchurch to address what it meant to be an urban citizen and to be a ‘part’ of a city to which residents had become emotionally and psychologically attached. Our hearts and minds had been imprinted with an abstract invisible map of the city: its nuances, its rhythms, its characters and its history had melded with our own, creating an intangible yet powerful marker of personal identity. As the fabric of our urban and suburban places was destroyed we witnessed time and again the consequence of the severing of this intangible thread connecting people with place. It reared its ugly head in a concoction of incongruous psychology and behaviour, rendering the city's inhabitants powerless yet desperate to restore, revive and recall what had gone before. An integral part of each Christchurch citizen was erased with the demolition of the city's architecture. Architecture, which Shelley Hornstein (2011) argues provides the ‘physical, mental or emotional’ mapping of space which ‘symbolically carries far more than the structural element of which it is built’ (p. 4).

Throughout the years when Christchurch experienced the reality of the country's historical epithet *The Shaky Isles*, I worked for *Heritage New Zealand* in their Christchurch office, managing Canterbury and West Coast outreach projects.

The Canterbury Earthquakes put into sharp relief the necessity to live with architecture which speaks to us of the familiar, the historical, the aesthetic and the utilitarian, and which provides a mirror for our personal memories. Hornstein (2011) believes that

once architecture is removed or destroyed, ‘the triggers must exist in the physical world for the recall to carry on into future generations’ (p. 5). This is what I attempted to do with *High Street Stories*: to bring the past that no longer existed tangibly into the present for future generations.



Figure 2. High Street precinct laneways post demolition, Christchurch 2013. Photo: Becker Fraser Photos

My role in the production of High Street Stories

With a background in oral history and documentary film and radio, the public outreach projects I developed for *Heritage New Zealand* were based on the assertion that stories and personal memories of place have the capacity to instill and engender a deeper sense of appreciation for historic places. I am an advocate of the fabric of real life, and am influenced by Walter Benjamin’s (1936) belief that ‘counsel woven into the fabric of real life is wisdom’ (p. 365).

Prior to the earthquakes and the production of *High Street Stories*, my desire through the many multi-media projects I worked on was that through embodied ‘appreciation’ audiences’ hearts and minds would open to the importance of the built historic environment and would potentially consider ways in which they might join the crusade to stem the neglect and destruction of heritage places. Through this process I hoped the audience’s own stories might fuse with those of the places being interpreted and that listening to the stories of others would not only help to understand place better but to create an internal dialogue and emotional resonance. Furthermore, through this

attachment - either intellectual, self-referential, or emotional - the site and built structures would be seen with greater historical and aesthetic clarity and importance and would resonate with and strengthen the listener's sense of self and identity.

As the Outreach Adviser for Canterbury / west Coast *Heritage New Zealand* I conceived of the project *High Street Stories*, recorded the interviews and sourced all accompanying text and visual material. Central to my role was directing the production of the website and the augmented reality application.

As a result of the earthquakes many of my existing projects were of no use and consequently aborted. The development of this project was prompted by the mass erasure of built heritage and associated memories and aimed to ameliorate citizens' diminished sense of self and agency.

I pitched the idea of *High Street Stories* to the senior management of *Heritage New Zealand* and after being given the green light I sought the initial funding from *Vodafone New Zealand*. Following this I partnered with the University of Canterbury's English Department who had just produced *Quakestories* and we jointly applied for funds from Internet New Zealand. After recording, editing and curating the stories I partnered with the augmented reality application producers the *Human Interface Technology Lab (HITLab)* at *Canterbury University*. Following this I engaged *NV Interactive*, whom I worked closely with on the design and implementation of the website. I developed and produced all aspects of the content for the website and 3-D application and worked closely with the professionals who worked on the technical and aesthetic aspects.

The Project: High Street Stories (www.highstreetstories.co.nz)

In August 2013, we launched the *High Street Stories* website (www.highstreetstories.co.nz). Stitching together the remaining threads of place, identity and memory, the *High Street Stories* website is also accompanied by an augmented reality application with over 100 geotagged stories.

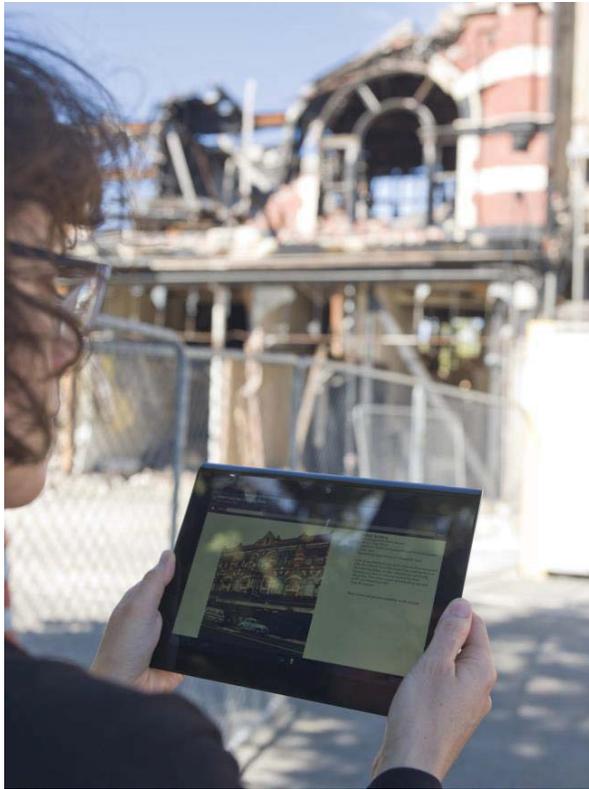


Figure 3. The author using the *High Street Stories* augmented reality app in lower High Street, Christchurch, 2013. Credit: Heritage New Zealand. Photo: Guy Frederick

High Street Stories is a repository of images, text and audio clips located on a map of the High Street precinct, covering stories, anecdotes and historical information under nine themes: Architectural Heritage, Regeneration, Culture, Yarns, Ngai Tahu, Trade, Social History, Archaeology and the Red Light District. The website has an augmented application which comprises all the audio stories geotagged to the 3-D images of the now destroyed architecture.

The home page of the website states that:

The Canterbury earthquakes in 2010/2011 irrevocably damaged the High Street precinct, with Victorian and Edwardian streetscapes and lively laneways changed forever. This is a collection of stories about the people and places that made up High Street, Christchurch. (<http://www.highstreetstories.co.nz/>)

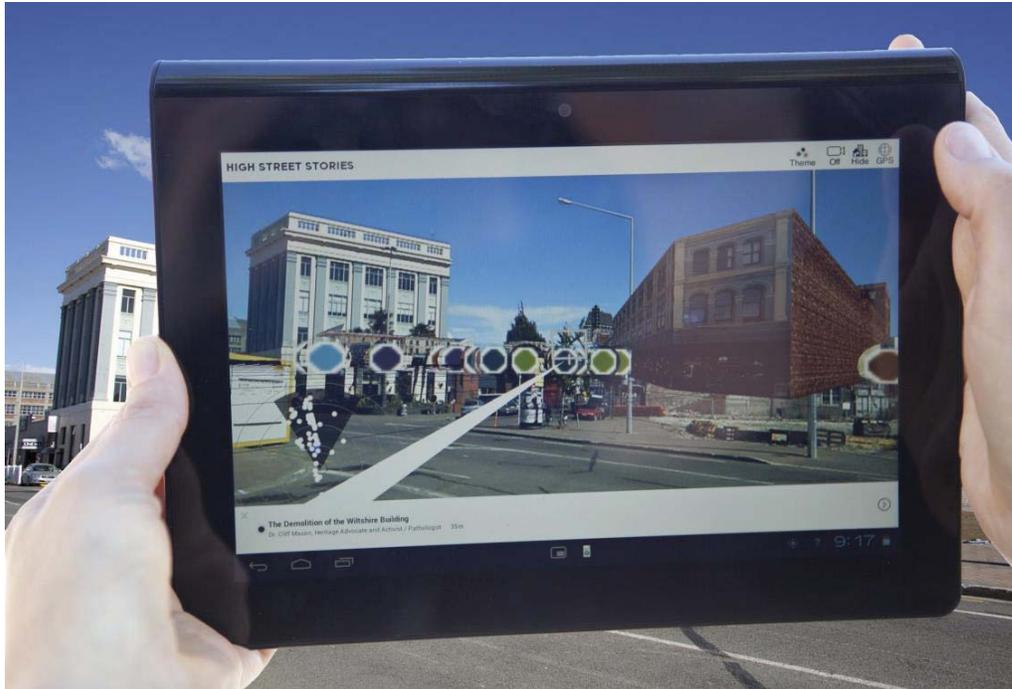


Figure 4. The *High Street Stories* augmented reality app. showing High Street from Tuam Street, Christchurch, 2013. Credit: Heritage New Zealand. Photo: Guy Frederick

The importance of High Street Stories as a digital heritage tool

High Street Stories would not have been produced if the earthquakes had not occurred, or had I not been persistent about its production. I believe that a project of this scale and with this risk - being online with the added complication of a 3-D application - would not have been supported by *Heritage New Zealand* had the earthquakes not rendered much of my work untenable. Despite this, the value of the project was recognised by the organisation as one which embraced new digital technologies and successfully partnered with a number of other institutions and organisations. However, beyond potentially alerting younger audiences to the work of *Heritage New Zealand* and the organisation being seen as pro-active in celebrating heritage in innovative ways, I am not aware if the project has benefited *Heritage New Zealand* in other ways.

In my mind, the project is most important as a celebration and remembrance of the social-history of place, and people's lives and activities within that place.

Historical understanding - the vernacular vs. the official

Integral to the curation of *High Street Stories* were the local vernacular narratives. The terms ‘stories’ and ‘yarns’ are used throughout the website to reinforce the vernacular nature of the material. These stories sit alongside the ‘official’ themes of Architectural Heritage and Ngai Tahu history and all have equal importance - the personal narratives are not ‘embedded’ in the official ones for the sake of retaining their ‘sacred and timeless’ nature but are positioned with equal value. The inclusion of official narratives, predominantly related to architecture, was partially driven by the requirement to address and interpret built heritage directly due to my role at *Heritage New Zealand*.

When curating the website I attempted to create a navigable and easily accessible experience by using dates, text, images and audio durations, taking into account Abrams’ (2010) point that listeners desire ‘a recognisable historical context’ (p. 47). I was aware from previous projects that I needed to be conservative regarding audio durations although was conscious of the need to retain the essence of individual speech patterns. The audio clips are between one and five minutes long. Although it was not feasible to reproduce the text of the interviews in their entirety, we provided short quotes which give an excerpt of the interview. Additional written material is provided where possible in order to enhance or provide more detail for the vernacular stories, as illustrated in the stories *Christchurch’s 90s Rave Scene* (Kong, 2013) and *Shooting the China Jerries* (Kennett, 2013). The accompanying text allows the vernacular story to be seen as embedded in a wider explanation or context, or conversely the official history can be experienced as an embellishment or enhancement to the story itself but which do not overwhelm the vernacular stories.

I had the wife of a well-known businessman in Christchurch come in and gingerly pushed her watch over. It was in a plastic bag. She said, "I've just rescued it out of the toilet!"

Tony Kennett

The Kennett's Jewellers business was established by watchmaker Robert Kennett and he and his wife and four children lived upstairs above the shop. The youngest, Ronald, was born in the back room in 1889. When Robert retired in 1922 Ronald took over the business and died in 1946 only three months after his son Tony had begun his apprenticeship.

The Kennett's building at 209 High Street was built in 1903/04 for Shier Brothers, watchmakers and jewellers. David Shier, a jeweller came to New Zealand from Glasgow and had this building built as a jeweller's shop in High Street. The Shier business appears in the street directories until 1964. During the 1960s the building was purchased by Kennett's Jewellers who had operated from the site next door, 211 High Street, since 1880.

Kennett's Jewellers operated from both buildings until they moved into 209 High Street, during the 1970s and remained there until the 2010 / 2011 earthquakes.

Figure 5. Text from *High Street Stories, We did a lot of odd Repairs*. Tony Kennett Interview. <http://www.highstreetstories.co.nz/stories/76-we-did-do-a-lot-of-odd-repairs-%E2%80%A6>

A number of the personal narratives on the *High Street Stories* website tell the vernacular history of the democratic and independent beginnings of the highly successful regeneration of the late 2000s. In terms of the trauma experienced as a result of the earthquakes and the loss of the area to demolition, one of the research participants said that connecting with like-minded individuals through the stories was 'soothing'. This was the purpose of the website - to remember, to create collectivity, and to 'soothe' the pain of loss by revisiting a place which had a strong narrative, a place which, despite many challenges, rose up to become a model of urban and civic wellness.

Loss - the impetus for storytelling

The Canterbury Earthquakes put decay and death front and center on our mental maps. One of the storytellers on *High Street Stories*, Cliff Mason (2013), said that he believes that when we demolish 'these cultural manifestations of the past', 'we lose something

of ourselves' due to the 'human feelings and values that are embodied' within them (Mason, 2013).

The impetus for the development of the project was the juncture at which the death of these built 'cultural manifestations of the past' (Mason, 2013), meets the desire to tell stories. The only way to mentally and emotionally rise above what had happened was to tell stories; stories of each specific event in minute detail. It was the only way of making meaning. We talked mostly about the event itself during those first few years following the earthquakes. However, in terms of the website content, it was never my intention to include stories of trauma and loss, I wanted to focus on the 'soothing' aspects: the familiar, the humorous, the historically unknown, the quirky or thrilling.

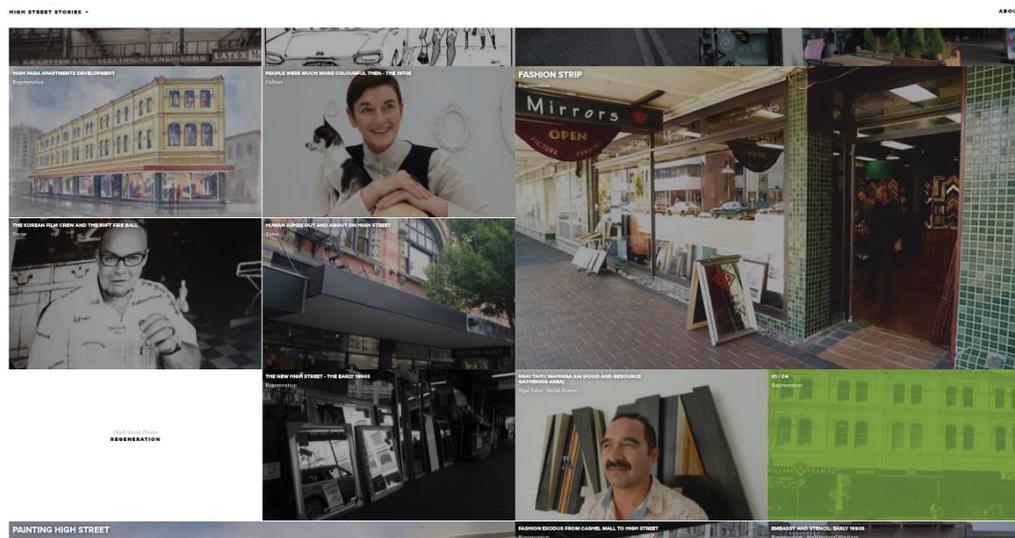


Figure 6. Screenshot from *High Street Stories* showing the diversity and use of High Street images - from illustrations to old photographs of business owners (left hand side image). Photo: Zoe Roland. <http://www.highstreetstories.co.nz/>



Figure 7. Nick Paris at Alice in Videoland. Image from *High Street Stories*. Photo: Zoe Roland. <http://www.highstreetstories.co.nz/>

High Street Stories was an attempt to retain and remember those traditions of artisan culture, storytelling and history of place by creating a portal for the memories, and as a tangible trigger for listeners' memories.

The loss of large parts of our city and our homes was very much like a death which left the city's citizens vulnerable and marginalised - 'anti-tradition' as its most volatile. The loss of place resulted in a loss of daily tradition and autonomy which was further exacerbated by a lack of governmental diplomacy. These losses, which leave individuals and communities feeling marginalised, often generate personal storytelling and encourage the process of revisiting and reshuffling previous personal narratives.

Just as Benjamin (1936) and modernists such as Ernest Hemingway (1929) wrote about the generation of bereft men returning from World War One needing to fasten their past to the new 'unrecognisable' present, so did Christchurch after the Canterbury Earthquakes. Similar to the changes which enforce new modes of functioning and coping such as war, migration, natural disasters and technological advancement, the earthquakes also created a fissure in the chronology of personal meaning and understanding which required this bridge of narrative to join the two together. The latter functioning to restore a fluency of personal histories in order to maintain mental well-being. The city's residents needed to create a bridge between previous life and

what was coined ‘the new normal’. Storytelling became that bridge. Individuals reached out to their neighbours, churches, relatives and the wider community in a way which had not occurred previously. Similar to the research by Indiana University (2015) on ethnically marginalised youth reaching out beyond their ‘real life’ ‘in-group’ via the internet, middle-class Cantabrians reached out across these socio-economic and religious and ethnic groups to one another in a compassionate plea for collectivity.

Those who experienced the Canterbury Earthquakes know first hand how unimaginably destructive an event like this can be to one’s mental well-being and to social and familial cohesion. In response to such loss, a groundswell of documentation occurred, many of which were based on oral narratives, to remember and to forge a way forward and particularly to restore collectivity and autonomy.

As an area of the city which sat on the fringes of Christchurch’s social, economic and aesthetic life for many decades, most of the *High Street Stories* are based on issues of counter culture and acts of resistance: prostitution in the time of ‘massage parlours’, illegal dance parties, protesting against heritage demolition, and the development of the street when commercial culture was heading to the malls. The High Street precinct was an embodiment of Berlant’s (2008) notion of ‘juxtapolitical’ and her theory of the ‘intimate public sphere.’ The stories are ‘juxtapolitical’ reflections of the action that took place there and they also represent a strong intimate community of people who lived, worked or experienced life in the High Street precinct.

Collective Identity and universality

The inhabitants of Christchurch have become unified as ‘fictive kin’ through the experience of the earthquake and through an existing knowledge of the cityscape. Since the earthquakes, this kinship has been noticeably expanded and strengthened. Winter (as cited in Hornstein, 2011, p. 18), calls those who collectively ‘share the imprint of history on their lives’, and who are ‘bonded not by blood but by experience’, ‘memory activists’ or ‘fictive kin’. He says that these ‘fictive kinship’ groups are ‘key agents of remembrance’ (as cited in Hornstein, 2011, p. 18). *High Street Stories* reinforces and is a celebration of this ‘fictive kinship’. As Hornstein (2011) says ‘in order to remember effectively, one must ‘shrink and focus’ from the national scale of remembering an event to the ‘particular and ordinary’ and that commemoration can

only begin by working through shared, communal memory' (p. 18). This is what *High Street Stories* attempts to do, working through generations of small ordinary memories so they become collective communal memories of place.

The current research - Research design and Methodology

The following Discussion and Analysis chapter comprises a synthesis and analysis of the case study participant research and the theory outlined in the previous chapters. Below are brief biographies of the four research participants.

Participant Profiles (High Street Stories)

A sample of four participants, three Christchurch residents and one individual who has never been to New Zealand were selected.

I selected the participants primarily on their differing relationships to the precinct. It was essential to engage participants who had different experiences of the area and who I knew to be highly articulate in order to explore the thesis ideas and concepts. I initially selected three participants, all from Christchurch. After they submitted their answers it became clear that due to their emotional proximity to Christchurch's High Street, its history and to the storytellers, I needed to engage a further participant who did not have any association with the area in order to see how the stories affected them. This proved fruitful - providing further ideas and links to the literature. This fourth participant provided insights and anecdotes into how people engage with the stories of others with contrasting lives and environments.

The three Christchurch participants were aware of the *High Street Stories* project and that it was a product of my work with *Heritage New Zealand*. It was important that they understood the project and had experienced the Canterbury Earthquakes. It was also important that they were the type of people who would choose, of their own volition, to go online and look at the *High Street Stories* website as it is a niche experience.

All four participants are intelligent women who are thoughtful, keen observers of others in relation to themselves and their environments. I know all of these women and

I have a different relationship with each one, spanning 2 to 13 years. Two of the participants are accomplished writers, signifying strong interpersonal skills of observation and interpretation of reality in addition to a vivid imagination. They are all self-possessed yet sensitive to others and diverse situations. They are all excellent listeners and conversationalists and are highly diplomatic yet critical thinkers. All four women have developed senses of humour - again I believe this to be an illustration of close observation of life and self reflection. All are able to express themselves through a number of different media - literature and/or visual arts.

In terms of how they diverge from one another, their backgrounds are dissimilar. Their socio-economic situations and geographic locations are diverse. The number of family members is different and which family members were present when growing up is also distinct for each participant. They range from 32 to 50 years of age. Gender was not a consideration in my selection, however cultural identification (ethnicity) was considered in terms of their perspective on these stories. Participants have different cultural affinities - Ngai Tahu, Western European, British and a New Zealand pakeha. Their relationship to the place is predominantly driven by their cultural identification - an indigenous New Zealander, an immigrant, one participant has never visited New Zealand and a European New Zealand national.

The biographies below were prepared in consultation with the participants. As stated in the Introduction the participants assigned themselves pseudonyms of their choice.

Irihapeta McNaught was a child in Christchurch in the 1970s and grew up with a strong sense of history and a love of old things due largely to her father's influence as a collector, and researcher of family history. Her school reports always noted her vivid imagination and creativity. She has worked in the Museum and Heritage sector for most of her career as a library assistant, heritage advisor, researcher and writer and currently works in public history, interpretation, storytelling and oral history.

Greta Roberts was born and raised in Christchurch but spent most of adult life living in the United Kingdom and Auckland. Shortly before the Canterbury Earthquakes she and her family reestablished themselves in Christchurch. She works as a commercial and literary freelance writer. She is a twin - and would like to think that makes her

good at sharing. Her grandfathers were a writer and a minister respectively and from them she learned her creed: "In the beginning was the Word", (although she doesn't subscribe to the rest of the quote from John 1:1.). Her church, consequently, is the library.

Sylvia Weiss was born in Western Europe and has lived in Christchurch since 1990. She had a creative studio on High Street for a number of years and spent considerable time on High Street during the 1990s and early 2000s. She works in academia and has a vibrant cheeky sense of humour and seems eternally youthful, perhaps due to not having had children.

Ana Modar was brought up an only child by a single mother. Though born in the United Kingdom she has lived in six countries and twelve of those years were in the Middle East. By the age of 14 she was living in France and was living independently. Each move from country to country brought her new perspectives on people, life and herself. She enjoys people watching, a hobby first discovered while sitting in airports watching people go from place to place. She is a good listener and is quite observant of people. Psychology is a domain she is drawn to naturally. She has three children, born in her early 20s, considers herself a country person and has a tertiary education acquired in her adult years. She now lives in Eastern Europe.

Potential bias

As the case study project is one I both conceived of and produced and I have non-professional relationships with all of the participants, the issue of bias was considered carefully. I requested absolute honesty from the participants and asked that they provide the type of responses they would if they did not know who had produced or curated the website.

In terms of my own bias to the project and this case study analysis I feel a certain distance from it as I no longer live in New Zealand, so am removed from both *Heritage New Zealand* and Christchurch City. It has given me the space to think and write about the project with the necessary objectivity.

However, as I worked so closely on the project for a period of 12 months I have ruminated thoroughly on what I wanted the project to achieve, its role in the community, its potential affective resonance and its position as a historical source. Those thought processes have provided a strong foundation for the project itself and have allowed a deeper analytical response.

The interview questionnaire

Each of the four participants listened to fourteen stories they selected based on the qualities of the narrative storytelling and which provided a range of themes and tones to the stories. I wanted a relatively diverse group of stories which gave the flavor of the most emotionally engaging of the stories on the site.

Following this, participants completed a series of interview questions based on the three key aspects of the research questions: how the stories affected the participants sense of collective and self identity, their historical understanding and if any of the stories (individually or collectively) produced feelings of empathy or humility.

The interview questions assisted with soliciting relevant ideas and insights and I attempted to analyse the interviews, while being mindful of Seidman's (1998) recommendations, to listen on three different levels, to what is actually being said, to the subtext or 'inner voice' of the participant and to the process and flow of the interview.

Limitations

The main identifiable limitation with the case study is that the stories themselves were recorded about the life of the High Street Precinct prior to the earthquakes. This has generally rendered them positive, 'interesting' anecdotes about a time and place rather than narratives which could potentially solicit emotional responses of 'affect'. It was a purposeful directorial decision to not include stories of 'loss of place'. However, narratives of trauma and loss would have solicited more defined affective responses. I selected research stories which I believed to be the most emotionally driven either through verbal expression or content to determine affective resonance or self-reflection. However none of the stories are highly emotional in content.

Summary

Produced as a response to loss and anger toward the powers which demanded the demolition of local heritage, this project presents vernacular narratives as rich and evocative in their descriptive and affect building capacities. Creating *High Street Stories* was essentially a love letter to a significant, dynamic part of the city and to the community of people who were contemporary pioneers in an all but abandoned part of the city.

In the following chapter the *High Street Stories* case study research is revealed in relation to the theoretical framework. The Discussion and Analysis chapter illustrates that there are strong confluences between vernacular narratives, listener identity, historical recollection and affective feeling for place and community.

Chapter Six

Discussion and Analysis

Introduction

The theoretical framework presents personal narratives as first person accounts which possess the ability to empower the speaker and the listener (Abrams, 2010; Thompson, 2009). Expressed as a means to make meaning from the world, its cast of often incomprehensible characters and our own experiences, personal stories connect individuals to one another and assist with finding confluences and narrative reciprocity and soliciting empathy (Abrams, 2010; Berlant, 2008; Koopman, 2015; Shuman, 2005; Thompson, 2009).

This thesis explores the concept of ‘intimate public spheres’, self-reflexivity and identity, empathy and historical understanding as related to the affective resonance propagated by personal narratives. The synthesis between the case study research and the theoretical framework produced foundational evidence of the expansive benefits of personal narratives. These benefits include: the development of individual and collective identity and intimacy, and increased historical understanding and agency culminating in the production of affective resonance.

I will aim to elucidate confluences and divergences between the theoretical framework and the case study participant research. I will also offer potential avenues for further study and make critical suggestions regarding the research outcomes.

To reiterate, the research questions I have endeavoured to explore are:

1. *How and why do personal narratives create i) a sense of self and collective identity, ii) empathy and iii) a depth of historical understanding?*
2. *How do these factors work together to create affective resonance within orators’ and listeners’?*

The Theoretical Framework

This research elucidates the offerings of personal narratives as significantly more than mere reiterations of events and experiences. Rather they prove themselves to be dynamic, multi-faceted personal and socio-historical documents which have the power to deepen our identity of ourselves and others. Our natural desire to connect via narrative as well as for protagonist status lead us to mentally sift through our memory bank to find ways to insert ourselves into the narratives of others. By doing this we elevate our own sense of importance, reinforce our life stories and connect via shared storytelling while simultaneously positioning ourselves within the frame of historical production and dissemination.

'Anti-tradition' and making humans the agents and subjects of history

According to transhumanists and narratologists, affective narratives are more relevant and necessary in the age of technology and the commodification of history. Theorists suggest that the characteristics of our age, consumerism and transience, are not providing us with what we need in order to flourish (Berlant, 2008; Berman, 1992; Hess, 2012; Trueman, 1998), and to become 'luminous' (Berlant, 2008). Within oral history practice, the voices of everyday people have prominence and act as a counterweight to the forces of hegemonic culture and historical production. Where people see that history has relevance to the lives of ordinary people as historical agents and subjects

According to Trueman (1998), the death of history and tradition left a 'hole' for 'any old fairytale' to occupy (p. 41). This 'hole', which has created what de Certeau (1984) called a marginalised 'silent majority', has been precariously filled with an 'image of local life' (Doheny-Farina cited by Makagon & Neumann, 2008, p. 60). As a genre which enables reality to fill the hole of 'anti-tradition' and which is effective at redefining the topography of historical and cultural representation, personal narratives help reshape and disseminate our experience of actual local and global life (Hess, 2012; Poletti, 2011).

Theologian Mary Hess (2012) writes that these narratives have the potential to extend our 'zones of intimacy' and Anna Poletti (2011) believes that in the form of digital storytelling their ability to create an 'intimate public sphere' is immense. There are

multiple benefits for the uptake of genres which create 'intimate public spheres'. Firstly, they provide a 'permission to thrive', a 'permission to live small but to feel large' (p. 3). They are 'juxtapolical' meaning that everyday lives have the propensity to 'mark out non-political situations' which are 'lived as a space of continuity and optimism and social-cultivation' (Berlant, 2008, p. 10). Berlant (2008) believes that it is possible for the affective and 'intimate public sphere' to harness 'the power of emotion' to 'change what is structural in the world' (Berlant, 2008, p. 12). This comes into effect as the 'psychological awareness' from fictional and nonfictional narrative 'carries over into the real world' (Chiaet, 2013). Thompson (2009) states that oral history and storytelling 'makes for contact - and thence understanding - between social classes, and between generations (p. 23).

The theoretical literature reinforces the argument that personal narratives have the potential for these transformative changes which enrich us individually (Berlant, 2008; Gottschall, 2012; Shuman, 2005; Thompson, 2009), collectively and globally (Fiske, 2008; Keen, 2006). From the necessity of life narrative for indigenous youth and adolescence (Bluck & Habermans, 2000; Lewis, as cited in Grimshaw, 2015) to those who experience trauma (Ammary, 2016) and marginalisation (de Certeau, 1984; Trueman, 1998), personal narratives are seen as fundamental to self stability and the creation of public intimacy and empathy. Furthermore, through the inclusion of 'small world stories' (Berlant, 2008), history also benefits as real people become the 'agents' and the 'subjects' of history, they become the protagonists within historical contexts (Trouillot, 1995). However, as individuals have not always been considered in the process of often agenda driven historical production, alternate genres of affect, such as oral history practice, have been conceived and redefined in order to speak to us of our inner worlds, encouraging empowerment which is often lacking in contemporary texts.

Authors of modernist fiction attempted to reignite affective storytelling after World War One as a reaction to grief and technological advancement. However, according to Walter Benjamin (1936) modernisation in the form of technological advancement was not a hinderance to humanity in itself, it was the consequent changes to daily rhythm which fractured community and tradition. In turn this loss of community ritual threatened the tradition of narrative storytelling. Much of modernist literature, through

its often first person narration, is considered ‘anti-modern’, in the sense that it ‘interprets modernity as an experience of loss’ (Ammary, 2016, p. 205). The concept of technology, or historical states of ‘anti-tradition’, as a driver of loss and grief runs through the work of a number of academics who have revered the autobiographical narrative for its affective resonance. Marx saw industrialisation as creating conditions which led to economic and social inequality; Benjamin (1936) believed that World War One destroyed our ability to explain experience and that our greater proximity to death removed us further from traditions of storytelling; Berman (1992) believed that modernisation was a great loss to our autonomy; and many of the ‘silent majority’ today see consumerism and technology as creating a perpetual loss of tradition. Historically and contemporarily, these losses propel the ‘silent majority’ into a state of marginalisation (de Certeau, 1984) removing them from spheres of intimacy and affective relations to others and to the humanity of the wider world.

Thompson’s (2009) notion that, ‘where no history is readily available it will be created’ (p. 1), was put into action in the 1960s with the advent of the ‘democratisation of history’ in the form of recording and disseminating the stories of those at the heart of marginalisation and loss (Hamilton & Shopes, 2008). Although, according to Berlant (2008), many narrative forms produce ‘intimate public spheres’, the key component which gave literary modernists and existentialists an edge of psychological realism and intimacy was their use of autobiographical material (Weinstein, 2007). Fundamentally important to the literary modernists’ realisation of modern ‘anti-tradition’, which encouraged self-reflection and affective resonance, was their ability to translate real life into fiction which resonated with those suffering as a result of the disharmony of the time (Van Stralen, 2005; Weinstein, 2007). Bodnar (as cited in Kosyaeva, et. al., 2002) wrote that this injection of autobiographical experience and emotion has the potential to ‘convey what social reality feels like rather than what it should be like’ (p. 103). It is the reflexive potential that personal narratives have on reality which work to generate empathic responses both cognitively and neurologically (Berlant, 2008; Gallese et al., 2011; Keen, 2006; Poletti, 2009).

Narrative empathy

The theoretical research suggests that an individual’s chronological life narrative plays a significant role in strengthening personal identity, creating more resilient, mentally

well human beings (Abrams, 2010; Gottschall, 2012; Lewis as cited in Grimshaw, 2015; McKay, 2014). Although fictional narratives evidently produce more affective responses than information based data (Benjamin, 1936; Keen, 2006; Mar as cited in Graves, 2014), nonfiction disseminated in storytelling narrative structure (Ricoeur as cited in Polkinghorne, 1991) has a similar effect on response and potential consequent altruistic behaviour (Keen, 2008). Understanding others through exposure to narrative, primarily literary or first person texts, opposed to popular fiction (Koopman, 2015), can stem xenophobia and prejudice toward others who exist outside our own 'in-group' (Fiske, 2008; Keen, 2006).

Furthermore, when listening to and reading narrative (fiction or nonfiction) a circular cause and effect learning experience is created, whereby as we read or listen we learn from the psychological inner worlds of often complicated characters. The lessons we learn from these narratives we practice in real world situations, and then, coming full circle, the real world situations and learnings are used to comprehend the characters within subsequent narrative experiences (Chiate, 2013; Keen, 2006; Koopman, 2015; Sklar, 2009). The latter bolsters the thesis argument further. This cause and effect echoes Mühlhoff's (2014) argument that resonance, as it pertains to social interaction, requires both internal and external forces and that we ultimately give back to the source of resonance strengthening its own resonant potential. An effective example from classical physics, observed in the 17th Century, is the way in which the oscillations of two pendulum clocks on a wall will synchronize after a certain time due to a minute exchange of resonant forces through the wall (Mühlhoff, 2014). Narratological theories also support Mühlhoff's (2014) theory that resonance, like narrative empathy, is both 'sedimented' and 'diachronically' developed, impacting upon future experiences of social interactional resonance (Chiate, 2013; Keen, 2006; Koopman, 2015; Sklar, 2009). Essentially, the role of storytelling acts to realise the sedimented internal and neurological resonance which is awaiting activation. Therefore, it appears that humans have evolved to respond to narrative storytelling in profound cognitive and neurological ways which benefit us both psychologically as well as behaviourally in terms of disarming prejudice and assist with our evolving states of affective resonance.

Inclusivity and pro-social behaviour

There is a fear among advocates of narrative that if we become blind to diversity in everyday life we are in fear of becoming a less empathic species (Manney, 2008). Understanding ‘otherness’, often generated via narrative, is a character trait necessary to deconstruct xenophobia and prejudice (Fiske, 2008; Fiske as cited in Cohen, 2013; Manney, 2008). Manney (2008) and psychologists such as Fiske (2008) draw our attention to our ever decreasing tolerance for one another and suggest strategies for us to be better humans. The strategies they suggest to assist with increasing tolerance of others includes reading novels, playing and conversing with people who are different from us (Fiske, 2008).

As a strategy for creating personal well-being and universal understanding across race, age, and socio-economic status, telling stories about ourselves has the potential to create human connectedness and humility within and between: workplaces (Fiske, 2008), family units (McKay, 2014) and communities affected by inter-racial war (Jones, 2016; Manney, 2008). As such, they are one of the primary strategies for broadening ‘in-group’ inclusivity, bridging the gap between people and increasing altruistic or pro-social behaviours (Fiske, 2008; Fiske as cited in Cohen, 2013; Keen, 2006).

Case Study - *High Street Stories*

The *High Street Stories* case study provided a complementary vantage point from which to investigate the role of affect and the historical value of personal narratives. Participants clearly articulated that the emotional tenor of individual stories was inextricably linked to their own connections to place, characters or historical recollections. It appears that the universality and intimacy created between the teller and the listener creates the affective response. Reinforcing the argument for the impactful role of ‘intimate public spheres’ on self and collective growth this interpretation also reveals that through listening to socio-historical vernacular narratives our sense of ourselves as valid historical and potentially political agents is reinforced.

The case study's major points of interest which further the argument are three-fold. Firstly, the research suggested that listeners' attempt to make connections to their own experiential narratives, and other narratives in their memory banks, even where no immediate connection to place exists. Secondly, the research made evident that storytelling and listening provides a route to affirming self-reflexivity through re-evaluation and reiteration. And thirdly, the research illustrated that the latter connectivity with self and narrative helps diminish the listeners' own feelings of perceived 'otherness'.

The Theoretical Framework and the Case Study - convergences and divergences

The case study reveals a number of syntheses between the theory and practice of personal narratives and affective resonance as they relate to self, history and empathic responses. The results presented a number of direct links to the theoretical literature, principally the theories of self-reflective thoughts and memories, the development of an 'intimate public sphere' and 'fictive kinship'. A number of unexpected confluences between the ways participants experienced the stories and were actively self-reflexive was particularly insightful and useful when analysing the research.

As outlined by the theoretical framework vernacular narratives, through a chain of events, generate experiences of affective intimacy between the teller and recipient whilst expanding the inclusivity of the historical narrative. This affective intimacy was noted a number of times in participant interviews - particularly driven by the tone and choice of expression used by the teller and from the universality of shared storytelling. Moreover, this 'sense of something shared' (Berlant, 2008) is not necessarily rooted in the listener and teller having experienced the exact same event, or having similar knowledge of places or people, as one participant Ana Modar experienced a number of times. The theoretical literature suggests that existing character, or personality traits, previous experiences, and exposure to narrative, as well as our empathic default setting of mirror neuron activation, all add to our ability for collective intimacy and empathy development via narrative (Chiate, 2013; Gallese et al., 2011; Koopman, 2015; Sklar, 2009). The case study made evident that exposure to difference, previous experiences and personality and character traits formed over a lifetime, such as through Ana's transient past have the propensity to change the boundaries of a person's 'in-group' as

well as how they relate to the stories of others. Whether experiencing official historical narratives or socio-historical personal narratives, the case study participants tended to ground their own understanding in the familiar and the personal (Abrams, 2010; Kosyaeva, et. al., 2002). Consequently, the experience of intimacy with others when listening to or discussing socio-historical narratives, official or personal, opened participants, Sylvia Weiss and Ana Modar to absorption of historical material as well as reiterating and developing their own life narratives, in the case of Greta Roberts and Irihapeta McNaught (Abrams, 2010; Kosyaeva, et. al., 2002).

'Anti-Tradition', loss and narrative

In Christchurch, the death of place, and for some, the death of friends and family, spurred on collective storytelling as a response to the loss of place. Maurice Halbwachs (1950) wrote that when a place is destroyed a person can feel as if a whole part of themselves is 'dying with these things...' (p. 4), or as Shelley Hornstein (2011) wrote, war and natural disaster which destroy architecture often symbolise 'human devastation as well' (p. 2). *High Street Stories* was one of the projects which helped to ameliorate these losses. Christchurch citizens' desire to create strategies to tell and record stories is analogous to Benjamin's (1936) theory that the closer we are to death and the natural world, the greater our connectivity to storytelling.

However, Benjamin (1936) also wrote that chaos and change creates a lack of ability to communicate our own experiences and that the value of experience can be quashed by modernisation and the trauma of change. At a time when public choice and democracy were under threat, *High Street Stories* responded to the plea by Berman (1992) and Berlant (2011) for the necessity of new genres of affect in a world of 'anti-tradition'. Their plea was for humans to find genres of affect which include them in historical texts in order to reclaim their position in the historical past and future and to push against the forces of modernisation.

Christchurch citizens did communicate their immediate losses and many local and nationally led projects contributed to soliciting community stories of the experience of the earthquake and its aftermath. However, the trauma of the event and the subsequent erasure of much of the city created what could be described as a pre-earthquake narrative tabula rasa, as expressed by two of the participants who said it was difficult

to recall the past and that the city seemed more gone when the past was narrated. It became evident that it was difficult to tell stories about how things were before what was coined ‘the new normal’. The past had been overshadowed and morphed through this new post-earthquake lens. *High Street Stories* utilises a first person storytelling genre to contribute to ameliorating this amnesia of our past. Hornstein (2011) believes that amnesia occurs as a result of the psychological warfare inflicted upon residents when architecture is destroyed. She states that in the wake of the destruction of place we require ‘triggers’ for remembrance.

As a ‘trigger’ to recall personal and social histories of a specific place over time, *High Street Stories* attempts to honour the egalitarian ethos of oral history discipline as an inclusive democratising form of history. Reinforcing Hornstein’s (2011) concept of the necessity for tangible ‘triggers’ for memory, Christchurch research participant Irihapeta McNaught writes that ‘The stories as a group, are certainly a trigger for numerous personal memories – reminders of where I have come from and what I have done in what is (essentially), my home town’ (McNaught, personal communication, May 15, 2016). Irihapeta continues by stating that due to the personal nature of the stories she felt ‘privy’ to these differing worlds. She concludes, ‘It is that desire to connect that draws the listener in and triggers personal responses’ (McNaught, personal communication, May 15, 2016). McNaught’s responses illustrates the theories of psychologists and narratologists (Abrams, 2010; Bluck & Habermans, 2000; Lewis, as cited in Grimshaw, 2015) on the necessity and our innate desire for coherent life narratives which are revisited and reaffirmed and which shift and evolve as we open ourselves to new experiences and narrative journeys. They become integrated into our life narratives to ready us for the future, as de Certeau (1984) wrote as ‘tactics for future use’.

Irihapeta’s expressed desire to ‘connect’ presents the essential nature of personal narrative - to recall the past in order to have conviction for the decisions made which affect the future in either dire or advantageous ways (Bluck & Habermans, 2000; Lewis, as cited in Grimshaw, 2015). In a follow up conversation Irihapeta said that she felt all remembrances and connections to her past generally served a positive purpose despite the untrustworthy nature of memory.

Greta Roberts wrote that her ‘desire to connect’ with the narratives produced feelings of both ‘alienation and connection’ to the place itself due to the loss of much of the city. Her feelings of ‘alienation’ are possibly akin to Benjamin’s (1936) theory that trauma can instigate a loss of communicability, and feeling of disenfranchisement. It is also a symptom of Trueman’s (1998) ‘anti-tradition’. However, Greta also stated that due to the fact that the city now only exists in her memory it seemed ‘more gone’, resulting in a feeling of ‘responsibility’ and that ‘the city needs people to care about remembering it, in order for it to exist – or in order for it to continue to exist backwards, as well as forwards’ (Roberts, personal communication, May 15, 2016). Her anthropomorphising of the city illustrates an emotive sentiment which shows the presence of affective resonance and the listener’s feelings for the city’s past and future which she may not have recognised before the earthquakes or before listening to the stories.

Vernacular and historical narratives

Memoryscape maker, Toby Butler (2011), wrote that although official historical interpretation is often valuable and necessary, it can be experienced as ‘monovocal’ or ‘academic’, which contrasts with the local vernacular voice he believes to be, ‘diverse, colourful, knowing, loving, direct, and real’ (p. 202). Although creating a textural historical understanding was important in the production of *High Street Stories* it was integral that the stories illustrated social reality in order to contribute immediacy and lived authenticity to the interpretation of cultural and historical sites. Irihapeta McNaught validates the attempt to make *High Street Stories* egalitarian in its inclusion of stories and vernacular and official historical narratives by writing that the project has a ‘democratising tone’ due to the fact it appeared ‘void of hierarchy – all stories (all people) are given equal weight and worth’ (McNaught, personal communication, May 15, 2016).

This egalitarian tone, as stated by two of the participants, was intentional and is the result of the vernacular narratives being positioned independently of, and in some cases, alongside the framework of official history, rather than being embedded within it or acting as an embellishment or counter history. *High Street Stories* includes the vernacular stories as part of the collection of historic narratives making them exempt in a sense from being co-opted ‘for official cultural goals’ (Bodnar as cited in

Kosyaeva, et. al., 2002). Nor, in this context do they undermine the ‘sacred and timeless nature’ of the official narratives (Bodnar as cited in Kosyaeva, et al., 2002, p. 103).

The narratives provide a foundation for learning about the wider official history, as an ‘entry point’, which speak to the historical narratives and vica versa, fleshing them out and combining, as Greta wrote, ‘the factual with a more esoteric quantity’ (Roberts, personal communication, May 15, 2016).

Sylvia wrote that the stories not only gave her a broader understanding of the geographic area but encouraged her to begin researching the historical past in greater depth. Sylvia’s response is symptomatic of the vernacular locating the listener within the historical context, and in turn assists with providing meaning to the official histories (Kosyaeva, et al., 2002). Brockmeier (as cited in Kosyaeva, et al., 2002) refers to this as creating ‘a sense of belonging that binds the individual into a culture while binding the culture into the individual’s mind’ (p. 97). Greta saw the personal narratives as adding to her understanding of the historical narratives, through the ‘...layers and complexity’ which helped her ‘drill down through the broader generalisations’ (Roberts, personal communication, May 15, 2016). She continues by stating that the architectural history and the first-person lived experience of those buildings were complementary and important to her emotional engagement. Furthermore, the presence of both narratives provided a richness to her historical understanding and the picture she was able to paint of the area, ‘The way people experienced those ‘facts’’, as she put it (Roberts, personal communication, May 15, 2016). Once again this would seem to add credence to Thompson (2009) and Kosyaeva, et al’s. (2002) theories of the way in which vernacular and official narratives work together to inform us in rich detail of the lived socio-historical past. The participant research suggested that these vernacular ways of conveying historical content are also effective with listeners who are not connected to the stories or narrators. Ana Modar made a number of connections to the place and the people, primarily through drawing on the life stories of her father who lived in an English town not dissimilar to Christchurch.

In terms of the emotional connections solicited by vernacular narratives opposed to purely historical ones, Sylvia did not differentiate between the different types of narratives and said that she felt empathic when listening to most of the personal stories and that she often feels emotional when hearing ‘people’s enthusiasm for their skills’ (Weiss, personal communication, May 15, 2016). The universality of human achievement. Sylvia continued, saying that she felt it ‘just as easy’ to connect with the architectural historian discussing built heritage (Weiss, personal communication, May 15, 2016). Although Sylvia agreed that the narratives worked together for her to make meaning, when she described feelings of affect they invariably came from the first person, rather than historical narratives. Sylvia had an artist studio in a building which was due to be restored after the earthquake but became a casualty of arson and required demolition. Sylvia said she felt very emotional when listening to the stories about this particular building because of its deep association with her own life and the city’s recent loss, reinforcing ideas of narrative catharsis or ‘scriptotherapy’ (Ammary, 2016).

These vernacular stories represent the small and ordinary stories which generally do not have the progression of ‘grand narratives’. Shuman (2005) wrote that grand narratives ‘often imply and sometimes make explicit a vision of progress, an ineluctable path toward an imagined future that might or might not be reached’ (p. 155). Vernacular narratives differ in that, if free of state or media control, they often present social realities as they are recalled at that moment - in all their gritty reality and through the lens of the tellers past and current reality. The actual reality of the High Street precinct, as told in *High Street Stories*, is that between the 1980s to the 2010s it was home to brothels, drug dealers, artist and band spaces and was general described as ‘unsavory’ and ‘unkempt’. The *High Street Stories* trace ‘the ebb and flow of history in High Street over time’ (McNaught, personal communication, May 15, 2016). Furthermore, Irihapeta wrote that the personal narratives function as a ‘series of brief glimpses into the lives of a diverse group of individuals’, ‘bring history to life’, and ‘they provide connection points for engagement’ (McNaught, personal communication, May 15, 2016). The latter response illustrates personal narratives’ ability to provide the flesh on the bones of the historical facts, which in turn creates cyclic connections and affirms the small human stories as integral to the larger official historical narratives (Kosyaeva, et al’s., 2002; Thompson, 2009). The reflective nature

of the participant responses suggests that through listening to the socio-historical narratives of others they felt ‘permission to live small but to feel large’ (Berlant, 2008, p. 3) and to be part of that historical context and to search the continuum of their historical past, present and potential future. These responses suggests the participants felt empowerment and historical agency through listening.

In terms of personal narratives adding to the historical context, Sylvia Weiss said they ‘helped with understanding the many layers of a place’ (Weiss, personal communication, May 15, 2016). Interestingly, Sylvia connected more with one particular story which was not on my list for her to review. This story was less personal and more like an official historical story about the Canterbury landscape. She said that the narrative by the great-grandson of William Wilson, the first nurseryman in the area, ‘confirmed perhaps’ that she cares ‘deeply about all this stuff’. She continued, ‘It probably confirmed that being an immigrant doesn’t mean you feel any less connected to a place’ (Weiss, personal communication, May 15, 2016). Sylvia’s response reveals that having historical understanding of a place can strengthen both your personal identity and your ties to that place and historical agency as related to that place, reintegrating place into identity. The response also presents an example of how we reflect upon narratives through the lens of the self, and as a result the self can be reevaluated, evolving in the process echoing Shuman’s (2007) theory that personal narratives have an ability to ‘evict their ordinariness and proclaim the extraordinary’ (p. 96), providing transformative properties of affective resonance and self evolution.

Due to the fact we instinctively adopt protagonist status when reading or listening in order to connect and place ourselves at the centre of the story, we tend to link these narrated experiences to our own experiences, sometimes rather tenuously, in order to connect (Abrams, 2010; Gottschall, 2012). All four participants shared their own stories in relation to almost every one of the *High Street Stories* they responded to. Just as Kosyaeva, et al’s (2002) research revealed, visitors do not always make sense of visual narratives based on the official history, rather, ‘they invoked personal stories’ (p. 105). Similarly *High Street Stories* participants tagged their own stories to the recorded narratives even if, in the case of the Europe based participant Ana Modar, they had no direct or even indirect connection to the actual story, place or characters presented to them.

According to Abrams (2010), narrators often wish to anchor their 'life in family or community rather than national histories' (p. 47). As Kosyaeva et al. (2002) wrote, gallery and museum visitors are, 'concerned with the concrete stuff of everyday life and personal memory rather than the abstractions of public memory' when viewing exhibitions and art works (p. 105). The *High Street Stories* participant research paralleled Kosyaeva et al.'s. (2002) suggestions that viewers and listeners use the official narrative, but do not enter into public memory practices. Rather they 'tag on' their own personal narrative as 'an escape from the public memory sphere' and disregard the official one (p. 105). Generally, this is possibly due to their inability to recall or articulate official history, therefore their own stories become default narratives.

Within the context of *High Street Stories*, tagging their own narratives became a way of linking themselves to the larger narrative, creating collectivity and making meaning from those narratives and characters on a deeper level. Providing a link to the theory which states that the more narratives we have been exposed to the easier we find it to make meaning and develop emotional responses to future narratives we encounter. This was illustrated by Ana Modar and the many lives she had lived which had expanded her 'in-group' (Chiate, 2013; Fiske, 2008; Gallese et al., 2011; Keen, 2006; Koopman, 2015; Sklar, 2009; Weinstein, 2007). Similarly, according to Mühlhoff (2014), our experience of affective resonance as a result of social interaction and narrative develops diachronically.

The self and the collective

The directorial intention of *High Street Stories* was that the socio-historical vernacular stories become part of the historical memory of listeners, becoming a platform for self-reflection and reintegration of new stories and histories, and creating an acknowledged appreciation for both the place and their own memory bank as it related to place (Brockmeier as cited in Kosyaeva, et al. 2002).

Benjamin's (1936) sentiment regarding a story's ingrained 'counsel' was experienced most markedly in the articulated change in participant emotional connections to their own memories, and the way they perceived the validity of their own memories. The

latter reinforcing Weinstein's (2007) theory that it is reflexivity which is the major driver of affective autobiography. Furthermore, the research concurs with Benjamin's (1936) belief that 'the storyteller takes what he tells from experience - his own and that reported by others' and 'makes it the experience of those listening to his tale' (p. 364), therefore providing a reciprocity of narrative sharing.

All of the research participants shared examples of reassessing their own memories after listening to *High Street Stories*. Greta was reminded of the value of her memories she had disregarded as insignificant; Irihapeta acknowledged the value in recounting the narratives of her younger years; Sylvia recognised how deeply she connects with the city and its landscape; and Ana reassessed some of her memories related to her own and her father's younger life.

One of the most interesting aspects of my participant research was the emotional self-reflection participants expressed upon listening. All four participants actively reflected upon their own experiences, sometimes being critical of them, or their lack of appreciation for past small events and experiences they had had. Two participants thanked me for the experience of 'enforced listening' - which allowed them to reflect upon their city and their own stories. Two participants also acknowledged that these 'sentimental' expressions of one's past are often derided or undervalued (Pence, 2004).

Being part of the case study, we could say, was akin to artisan 'weaving and spinning' which was once a form of 'enforced listening', where artisans and journeymen would sit for hours talking and listening to the goings on of the region and beyond (Benjamin, 1936, p. 367). Two of the participants acknowledged that lack of time and narrative triggers which activate personal storytelling was partially responsible for their disengagement rather than their own existing narratives. Irihapeta implied that it makes her uneasy reminiscing about her early life. She later stated that it was a positive experience and helped her address some issues of her past, again shoring up the argument for affect and narrative self-reflection.

Greta Roberts mentioned that when she thinks back on her life, she often feels as if she has been 'different people' and led a series of 'different lives', with many facets to her existence which feel unconnected or tenuously connected. However Greta came to the

conclusion, through listening and responding to the stories, that remembering and reflecting upon her life is ‘essentially an act of reintegration’ (Roberts, personal communication, May 15, 2016), rather than becoming a different person. Roberts response speaks to Mühlhoff’s (2014) theory that resonance is built upon over time rather than starting anew with each social or narrative interaction, strengthening our ability for affective resonance. This reintegration, psychologists say, is essential to our sense of evolving identity and strengthening our sense of self these narratives we hear and experience are integrated into existing narratives becoming ‘tactics for future use’ (de Certeau, 1984, p. 24).

Linde, (as cited in Abrams, 2010), wrote that the study of life story and the self coincide at the point where we actively compose our sense of self. Greta’s ‘act of reintegration’ is essentially the point where the narrator is in a process of ‘continuously and perpetually’ revisiting the act of composure in order to ‘achieve coherence in relation to a changing social world’ (Abrams, 2010, p. 49). According to Bruner (as cited in Abrams, 2010) the way in which we make meaning of life’s events lies in the way in which our narratives are ‘interpreted and reinterpreted, told and retold’ (p. 40).

On a number of occasions participants responded reflectively to the way in which stories were communicated; the phrasing, self-reflection, prosody, the patterns of stress and intonation in a language, and the tone of enthusiasm in some cases. Theoretical narratological interpretation has acknowledged that we respond differently to narrative depending upon the way it is communicated (Gallese et al., 2011; Keen, 2006; Thompson, 2009). The participant research suggests that individuals are drawn to particular tone and prosody - which is possibly a cultural phenomena and is determined by listener personality and character traits.

In a psychoanalytical context, analysts tune into what psychoanalyst Ana-Maria Rizzuto (as cited in Gallese, 2011, p. 198) calls the patient’s ‘total self’ which relies on the ‘prosody’ (the patterns of stress and intonation) and emotional history of the narrative. As mentioned previously, Mühlhoff (2014) also supports the concept of human connectedness through ‘affective attunement’ of speech patterns and tone.

For Greta acknowledging the intonation and turn of phrase used gave her the feeling of discovering something alongside the narrator. Greta wrote that she loved ‘the fascination in his voice’ which was ‘like listening to a treasure hunter or an archaeologist’ (Roberts, personal communication, May 15, 2016). She continued, ‘there’s an intimacy about the story and in the disclosure of his experience that I found really engaging’ (Roberts, personal communication, May 15, 2016). This echoes Benjamin’s (1936) notion of the unexpected gift of ‘counsel’ being entwined within the story, like the traces of the storyteller’s personality being ingrained within the story ‘the way the handprints cling to the clay vessel’ (p. 367). Essentially Greta was engaged by the feeling which was implicit within the story, not necessarily verbally expressed, but evident within the tone and phrasing, the pauses and volume. A number of the participants commented on the ‘way’ two particular stories were told which created affective resonance and created self-reflection. In *Ulysses* (1922), James Joyce’s literary alter-ego Stephen Dedalus wrote that, ‘We walk through ourselves, meeting robbers, ghosts, giants, old men, young men, wives, widows, brothers-in-love. But always meeting ourselves’ (p. 204). Reflecting this quote, the research suggest that creating affective intimacy between narrator and receiver has the potential to open the receiver to think more thoroughly about themselves and their past, and that it is our past and life narrative which determines our current narrative interpretation.

With an emphasis on the development, reflections and evolution of self the research presents the importance of self knowledge and identity in the process of receiving and understanding personal narratives, our own and others. Essentially confirming that in order to fully comprehend and find meaningful connections to others and to narrative we need to plumb our own narrative memories, and in doing so we reassess and reevaluate our own pasts. As a consequence our existing memories evolve through layering, appropriating and reassessing (Abrams, 2010; Thompson, 2009). Through this process we can source historical agency. This suggests that our understanding of the world and of other people arises from our deeper connection with ourselves as a conglomeration of chronological memories shaped into narrative form (Gottschall, 2012; Habermans & Bluck, 2000; Lewis, as cited in Grimshaw, 2015). Furthermore, the lens through which we view the world is through our own set of experiences and narratives, formed as memory and woven together into a chronological life narrative. The stronger the life narrative is, as a foundation, the easier it is for us make meaning

from, and empathise with others (Chiate, 2013; Fiske, 2008; Gallese et al., 2011; Keen, 2006; Koopman, 2015; Sklar, 2009; Weinstein, 2007).

Counterfactual narrative

One benefit of listening to or revisiting previous narratives is the potential for counterfactual thinking. Participants suggested that listening to *High Street Stories* not only unlocked remembrances of related events, it also allowed them to go back in time, and in a sense, to make peace with the past through the lens of the present.

Irihapeta Ramsey said that listening to the stories ‘forced’ her ‘to acknowledge’ her ‘past and connection to place’ and that they were ‘reminders’ of where she has come from and what she has done in her life (McNaught, personal communication, May 15, 2016). Irihapeta believed that it was because the stories were like being ‘privy to a casual yet engaging conversation’ that there was a desire to connect through personal reflection - it was the personal nature which provided the trigger to counterfactual thought (McNaught, personal communication, May 15, 2016). In this case the counterfactual thought was not embedded in the narratives themselves but emerged from the participant questions and discussion.

Narrative’s role in calibrating our sense of ourselves as well as moulding us continually has been stressed by oral history theorists such as Abrams (2010) and Thompson (2009). All four of the participants remarked on how listening allowed them to re-experience as well as reassess their own memories with pleasure, illustrating that narratives often remind us of our values and the things we once cared about.

The story *Christchurch’s 90s Rave Scene* (Kong, 2013) had a particular resonance with one of the participants. Again, not because of the content but the way the storyteller described himself and the experience in retrospect. His tone and self-reflexivity solicited a sense of affect for her. She said it brought back personal memories but she also ‘responded to the slightly wistful narration of the story’ and ‘a lovely tenderness to the way he talked about the ‘scrawny nineteen year-old’ that he used to be’... ‘it shows the way in which hindsight can give things a sort of glow’ (Roberts, personal communication, May 15, 2016). Greta explained that the narrator told the story and the expressions he used really ‘captured’ the way we reflect upon ‘magical moments’

in our lives yet at the time we do not see them like that. She concluded that it was a wonderful reminder to cherish these life events. As an example of counterfactual thinking where we reassess our past decisions and how we once determined what were ‘important’ memories, it was the narrator’s expression of regret, tone of nostalgia and his spontaneous acknowledgment of the importance of these times in his life which activated a counterfactual response of sorts in the research participants.

The recollection, although not strongly counterfactual, reveals a process of reevaluating and appreciating one’s own life narrative as a result of listening to the narratives of others. Shuman (2005) asserts that because personal stories make meaning beyond their context, as in this case, they have the potential to speak to and represent a ‘larger, collective experience’, allowing for wider meaning (p. 71). Greta summed up her experience of listening to the stories by saying that they offered her a rare ‘unexpected opportunity’ to reflect upon her own life, particularly the period of her late teens and early twenties. This shows that narrative can ‘enrich our sense of perspective’ (Roberts, personal communication, May 15, 2016). There were many examples from the participant research which presented stories as greater than the sum of their words, and where meaning, solicited and encouraged by the participant research process, was deep and multidimensional.

The participant research suggests that listening became an opportunity to revisit who they once were or who they thought they were in the past and the present, both confirming and strengthening their perception of themselves and their life narrative, serving an important purpose in individual well-being (Gottschall, 2012; Lewis as cited in Grimshaw, 2015; Portelli cited by Abrams, 2010). The stories and research process also provided listeners the advantage of reciprocal narration. According to Abrams (2010), the possession of ‘a sense of self-worth and being able to express that publically’ (p. 52) is a key determinant in our social well-being. Telling as well as listening to stories, particularly in this participant context allowed for reciprocal oratory. Two participants expressed gratitude for having the memories reignited and for having the opportunity to voice them.

Narrative appropriation

An essential component of the curation and design of *High Street Stories* was that users made connections between people and places to create a discrete world within the remains of the High Street precinct. Like an archaeological dig, visitors could piece together the stories and characters together to create the history and atmosphere of the place. Ana did this successfully despite her lack of actual experience of the people and the place to draw from. Ana's response augmented Sklar's (2009) theory that to make meaning from both fiction and nonfiction we draw on our experiences of people in real life to determine conclusions, settings and character motivation. Ana utilised her own vast set of experiences, appropriated the memories of others (Shuman, 2005) and even drew upon song lyrics to piece together the environment and the characters.

Ana, who lives in Europe and has no connection to Christchurch other than through these stories, made very strong connections as she transposed the people and places within the story with similar ones from her personal chronology, again illustrating a natural human desire for self-reflection, and that our own life narrative is ever present and the strength and content of that self narrative determines and colours all other narratives we are exposed to. Abrams (2010) explains this as the self being constructed from both within and as a response to social and cultural environments as well through various discourses.

The participant research also found that occasionally we appropriate or inadvertently uncover less conventional narratives in order to make meaningful connections from our past. The research stories sparked stories from Ana's own past and other narrative forms which were personally significant. An Eddie Izzard comedy skit, and a lyric from *The Red Hot Chili Peppers* came to mind when reflecting upon earthquake ravaged Christchurch city - 'Destruction leads to a very rough road, but it also breeds creation'. Song lyrics are often underestimated as highly prolific sources of affective personal narrative (Gottschall, 2012). Although not necessarily profound, this connection illustrates how, in this context, not only did the stories from the website encourage Ana to access her own stories, they also brought poetic narratives to the fore - narratives which had resonated with her previously and became tools for understanding future narratives.

Ana's response is interesting in terms of how fictional and nonfictional narratives can fuse, deepening our understanding and providing meaning. Where we don't possess our own experiential narratives we tend to appropriate them from those we have heard, read, or even sung to. As Shuman (2005) states, despite storytelling being an 'aspect of the ordinary' we often require 'the appropriation of others' stories, to find 'inspiration, redemption, emancipation, even subversion' (p. 5). The participant research and the literature suggest we mentally sort and categorize narratives, both our own and appropriated, until we find a match or a small collection of narratives to assist us in making meaningful connection to stories and their complex characters (Chiate, 2013; Sklar, 2009).

Ana responded to the *Red Light District* collection of stories by telling me that when she was twelve years old she met Thai women who worked as prostitutes, and were 'friends' of her fathers. She painted a very detailed picture of the bar where she met them and the clients, but her most vivid recollection was of how the women treated her - with respect, interest and care. Because it was an unusual experience and possibly perplexing for her at such a young age, her memory bank has made it more accessible and easily retrievable. The human neurological system functions to make our most emotional memories easily retrievable to keep us safe from experiences which have proven emotionally or physically damaging in the past. So when Ana encountered the stories of the women who worked as prostitutes in Christchurch's High Street area, she had an existing and easily accessible narrative of her own, allowing her to make significant meaning and emotional engagement with these new, previously unknown characters. Shedding light on the theoretical literature on the deconstructing of prejudices as a result of being exposure to narratives and people of outside our 'in-group', Ana responded to these stories with compassion and warmth due to existing narratives and experiences which had quashed any negative responses (Fiske, 2008, Keen, 2006). Vernacular narratives go further than assisting with character connections - they have the potential for the occurrence of collective place-based kinship through recognising themes and characters which possess universality among seemingly disparate and ordinary stories (Berlant, 2008; Poletti, 2011).

The 'intimate public sphere' and 'Fictive kinship'

High Street Stories represents an 'intimate public' of people and communities who lived, worked in and had connections to the High Street precinct. Through the quiet political voice, heard through the stories of those who resisted the status quo by protesting against heritage demolition, working illegally as prostitutes, opening businesses deemed unfeasible in a place which was slated as non-commercial, and pioneering independent businesses and art galleries, the site represents a strong 'juxtapolitical' collection of stories (Berlant, 2008). Due to the larger number of vernacular stories they take precedence over the official historical narratives that they sit alongside. Via the use of everyday vernacular 'juxtapolitical' narratives, the website subverts the pervasive feeling of marginalisation and 'anti-tradition' which was created by Christchurch's new political status-quo.

The process of listening to and disseminating memories of place, as illustrated by the participant research, creates a chain reaction of reflection, identity reintegration and affirmation culminating in a deeper integration into the collective or 'intimate public sphere'. This experience of belonging can also be called 'fictive kinship', a term coined by American historian Jay Winter (as cited in Hornstein, 2013). Ana said that through making character and place connections between the stories she was able to feel 'a part of the community' (Modar, personal communications, May 15, 2016). 'Fictive kinship' occurs organically when a group experiences a shared event, however personal narratives have the ability to extend remembering to include those who have experienced the event by proxy, those people become part of an 'intimate public sphere' of affect. Affective resonance is a byproduct of 'fictive kinship' and being part of an 'intimate public sphere', which was expressed through the combination of self-reflection, the recognition of universal themes, feeling affected by narrative tone and turn of phrase and stressing the holistic value of the official and vernacular histories.

Ana said that she made strong links between people and places after listening to a number of the stories where the same building or person had been mentioned. She said this created a definite sense of place for her and that through their voices she had a sense of what 'kind' of people they may have been. She said that 'it seemed more authentic than just reading history' and that the linkages between characters in the narratives themselves and throughout the collection helped with creating a holistic

picture of place and a sense of belonging. Ana concluded by saying that she developed ‘a feeling of knowing the community in a deeper way without going there or knowing the people’ (Modar, personal communications, May 15, 2016). This response suggests that Ana had become part of an ‘intimate public sphere’ of individuals who emotionally and historically connect with post-earthquake Christchurch. Ana’s response is an example of Sklar’s (2009) notion that through narrative exposure our imaginations are able to close the gap between the real and the fictional, or in this case a narrative which is so removed that it could well be fictional.

Additionally, participants felt that there was a better understanding not only of their local community history but also an indirect link to a much wider global ‘intimate public’ - placing one’s seemingly isolated ‘village’ collective on a global map. The universality of personal stories in this research tended to highlight the universality of certain narratives throughout time and space. This is important to our sense of global collectivity and historical understanding, particularly in the age of technological connectivity and more so for isolated countries like New Zealand. Greta noted that, in the story *The famous Cotura children’s duffle coat* story, ‘the tailor talks about ‘the garment district, which is a phrase I’d associate with New York, not Christchurch - that kind of thing locates Christchurch in a particular time in manufacturing history’. The latter possibly suggests that the historical context is broadened to a global context also providing deeper connections to historical narratives over space and time.

Narrative empathy - ‘standing in the shoes of others’

The notion of narrative ‘transportation’ is the ability storytelling has to take us out of ourselves and into the life of another. It is not always beneficial to mirror ourselves and our behaviour, but sometimes, as Bertolt Brecht wrote, art should be ‘a hammer with which to shape’ life (as cited in Manney, 2008). It is the ability art and narrative has to massage our assumptions and prejudices that can provide affect and societal change. Thompson (2009) believes that, ‘through entering into the lives of their informants’ we can ‘gain more understanding of values’ which we do not share, often producing ‘respect for the courage shown in lives much less privileged than their own’ (p. 12). Like geographic travel, personal narratives provide perspective, and contrasts and comparisons which allow us to evolve socially, intellectually and emotionally.

Manney (2008), wrote that she hoped Brecht's hammer, used to shape society through art, and communication, would be effective for creating empathy and helping to guide us beyond a technologically driven world. One of the unique and affecting characteristics of both art and storytelling is its ability to 'transport' us out of ourselves into worlds which are different and to challenge us to redress or refine ourselves, our *modus operandi* and potentially our mind set.

Ana Modar made connections between her geographically unique experiences and the ones expressed in the stories. She recognised that her strength in accessing universality possibly came from her actual lived experience - often having experienced alienation through living in foreign countries, which allowed her, when necessary, to transport herself into the narrative worlds of others. Modar believed these character traits, honed and refined over time, and more out of necessity than desire, allowed her to feel for subjects of narrative more easily.

Ana's experience of geographic travel is analogous to the way art, narrative and literature populates our mind with alternate realities and narratives which can figuratively transport us, widening our experience of the world and 'otherness'. Ana believes that it is the 'vulnerable position that travel puts you in that means you must become humble and learn quickly'. 'As a result of travel your mind needs to be open, that part which is easily shut off must be open to survive in a sense, you need to let go of your own identity to let yourself into another culture' (Modar, personal communications, May 15, 2016).

Having lived a more varied life in terms of exposure to different people, places, and values may encourage connectivity and acceptance of others. Reading literary fiction and listening to others stories encourages mind travel, the weaving in and out of the stories we have heard and our experiences, allowing us to draw connections and make meaning with greater ease. These 'character traits' (Chiate, 2013; Koopman, 2015) dramatically alter the level of acceptance we have for others and our ability to put ourselves in 'the shoes of others' (Fiske, 2008).

Ana's feeling of empathy and understanding for the *High Street Stories* characters could also be due to 'liberated embodied simulation' (Gallese, 2011). The theory of

‘liberated embodied simulation’ states that we feel more empathy for narrative content which is removed from our sphere of life. As Ana was geographically and emotionally removed from the Christchurch situation she experienced to a degree a suspension of her own reality which liberated ‘new simulative energies’ (Gallese, 2011, p. 199). ‘Liberated embodied simulation’ allows for greater emotional connection with the stories and in turn closes the gap between the stories and a listener’s existing narrative.

Personal characteristics and narrative empathy

Travelling in the real world provides the raw material for what Sklar (2009) and Koopman (2015) deem to be essential for empathy production. Sklar (2009) believes that in order to understand fictional and nonfictional narratives we are required to draw from real life to formulate motives, characters and settings. Koopman (2015) discovered through her research that personal characteristics determine the depth of understanding and empathy a reader feels (p. 63). Sklar (2009) concurs with Koopman (2015), saying that it is ‘largely’ experiences in ‘real life’ which create the reader/narrative bond. Ana in particular expressed a number of examples of this: the Thai prostitutes, the antique dealer and the stories of industry which all come from elements of her father’s life provide points of reference or anchors by which to understand the High Street Stories. As Irihapeta said, ‘you want to make connections’ as it is ‘human nature’ (McNaught, personal communication, May 15, 2016).

Koopman (2015), Manney (2008) and Sklar (2009) believe that the more stories we have been exposed to, either from our own experience or from literature, the more we can relate to and produce emotional or empathic responses to the current narrative. The cyclic process of listening, recalling, reciting and reinforcing memory which creates meaningful connections, empathy and understanding, was demonstrated by the participant reflective responses.

As an example of how these vernacular histories are a way to represent the ‘complexity of social relations’ (High, 2011, p. 219), the listener uses their own cache of stories to connect with characters who could be viewed as foreign or the ‘feared other’ (Fiske, 2008; Manney, 2008). It was Ana’s existing character traits and interpersonal understanding which provided her with the raw material to empathise and make

meaning from the story. Similarly, Irihapeta recalled her own tenuous connection to the women narrators who formerly worked as prostitutes, recounting feminist rallies and women's 'reclaim the night marches' in the early 1990s.

Confirming that existing knowledge and experience assist with connections and collectivity, Irihapeta stated that her own lived experience in Christchurch helped her feel a collective emotional warmth. Irihapeta wrote that due to her familiarity with Christchurch she had definite 'fixing points', yet she said without these she may not have such a deep connection, 'other than at a higher conceptual level in terms of a sense of connection to 'all of humanity'' (McNaught, personal communication, May 15, 2016). This statement provides evidence of affect despite a lack of actual recognition to a place or event. Ana expressed a '*real*' understanding of the trauma and significance of the earthquakes only after listening to the stories, reinforcing Shuman's (2005) notion that personal narratives hold much greater meaning than they convey through the words themselves.

Irihapeta's concept of 'connection to all of humanity' is what makes us 'human', our evolved sense of inbuilt empathy. Regardless of what one reads or watches, as long as it has the elements of structured narrative (fiction and nonfiction), our neurological disposition provides us with the hand-brake essential to halt potential empathy loss (Gallese et al., 2011; Manney, 2008; Singer as cited in Keen, 2006). If given encouragement through narrative, in image form, fiction or narrative nonfiction, our neurological pathways are pre-programmed via mirror neuron activation to feel empathy for others and to respond accordingly. One way Fiske (2008) suggests we can overcome prejudices is via storytelling or sharing experiences to help transport ourselves into the minds of others, just as Ana's response regarding her lived narratives illustrated.

This study has presented affective resonance as being a product of the narrative process. As the end product of listening, reflecting and reintegrating narrative affective resonance is, as Mühlhoff (2014) states, a uniquely individual experience born from an array of personal and environmental factors. Similar to the evolution of understanding and empathy for the fictional or real life characters in narrative one of the primary drivers of affective resonance is the repeated exposure to occurrences and

narratives which are affecting. The participants expressed through feeling affected in a number of ways: through reflecting upon their past experiences and on how they viewed their younger selves and the validity of their narratives, through the tone and phrasing used by storytellers which sparked feelings of nostalgia and loss, through plumbing their own narratives and reciprocating with stories of their own pasts, and through recognising their value in the historical past and feeling a greater connection and curiosity about it.

Further Study

The focus on, personal vernacular rather than fictional narratives, and their role in generating affective resonance and humility make this thesis a strong contribution to the relatively uncharted area of museum studies literature. This study will contribute to a growing body of research by proponents of the disciplines, Neuro and Transhumanism. As a relatively untapped area of study, there is a broad range of topics open to further research, regarding the affect of personal narratives on humanity and history.

This thesis operates as a starting point for further study in a number of areas. One area is the way in which the obverse of affective resonance, the theory of cognitive dissonance allows for the resolution of tensions between beliefs and actions by provoking change in those beliefs and actions. In the case where affective resonance through universality and narrative intimacy does not occur museums have a significant role to play in considering the past reflectively and reflexively in order for specific social-history to be seen anew and to challenge perceptions. The curation of personal narratives has the potentiality for this reflexivity and historical reflection. This is an area where further study is necessary.

Although the research suggests that affective resonance is an embodied, temporally located experiential phenomenon that binds people through positive associations, the narratives which provoke affective resonance and allow for its dissemination and contagion are not always positive. The affective resonance engendered by collectivity and universality often reinforce negative societal consequences and actions such as sexism and racism. This thesis opens the way for discussion of these matters.

Further study on the pro-social benefits and altruistic behaviours resulting from listening to personal narratives or oral histories would be beneficial. Fiske's (2008) work is a positive beginning to how understanding the conscious desires of those we view with scorn or fear (Manney, 2008) can affect our perspective and potential inclusion of them (Keen, 2006). Oral historian Steven Cohen (2013) asks how would these results change or be enhanced if the listeners heard a personal story from those the group did not initially identify with. Hess (2012) asks a similar question: 'What might be possible, for instance, if we could invite people to extend their zone of intimacy? Might digital storytelling be one mechanism for doing so?' (p. 413). As suggested by Cohen (2013), the study of personal narratives could benefit from focused neurological research, as has been conducted with fictional narrative (Gallese et al., 2011) and basic interpersonal information (Fiske as cited in Cohen, 2013).

Research has been conducted on orality and affect which illustrated that emotionally driven soundtracks and noises alone can trigger empathic mirror neuron activation, and those with initially higher empathy levels presented higher mirror neuron activity when listening (Coplan & Goldie, 2011). Additionally, Stern (as cited in Mühlhoff, 2014) writes that 'affect attunement', the way in which humans establish joint 'temporal patterns, contours and rhythm' lead to immediate experiences of feeling connected to the orator (p. 1014). In terms of personal narrative as affect building, both aural qualities and content require further research.

Summary

Ambitious in scope, the study has successfully made a number of connections between the disparate disciplines forming the theoretical foundation, and their relevance to the participant research. Although many confluences and conclusions were made through the synthesis of theory and practice, a less ambitious scope would have produced potentially more comprehensive interpretation, particularly the role of personal narratives in empathy building.

This study is unique in that it attempts to find meaningful connections between the role and efficacy of personal narratives and existing studies. As the previous studies do not directly focus on first person narratives, a broad research approach was taken, investigating: narrative empathy, which is primarily focused on fictional texts, the

psychology of self, and the ways in which human beings are the producers of, yet removed from, historical production.

There are many unexpected outcomes of receiving first person narratives, as illustrated by participants: self reflection, renewed historical interest and historical agency, drawing from other narratives and reassessing our own. These positive characteristics are illuminated by Evans assertion (as cited in Thompson, 2009) that recording, curating or compiling oral sources point ‘to the connectedness of all aspects of history and not to their divisions from each other’. It is this cohesion between personal and official history through various forms of storytelling which produces a coherent multidimensional historical understanding. An understanding which is enriching for both history itself and for the people who are its subjects and agents. Furthermore, Thompson (2009) wrote that the full potential of oral history can be realised through the changes in the ways ‘in which history is written and learnt, in its questions and its judgements, and in its texture’ (p. 83). The participant research demonstrated the strength of first person oral recordings and the rich contribution they can make to museological practice methodology and as social history in its own right.

This chapter has provided a range of points of confluence and synergies between the theory and practice of personal narrative forming a considered synthesis and analysis of literature that is under-utilised in museum studies. In piecing together the available literature and research I have attempted to form a coherent illustration of: how the theory and practice of first person narrative produce self reflection, how narrative promotes social cohesion through shared emotional knowledge and how it enriches the participants’ sense of their historical self. These three components together create a sense of affective resonance which can be transformative and empowering.

The following chapter concludes this thesis. The conclusion distills the research and brings the thesis into a unified whole in order to better understand personal narratives in relation to the research question.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

Focusing on the capacity personal narratives possess to provide listeners with affective resonance, identity and historical understanding, this thesis has attempted to illuminate the value of vernacular narratives for potential use within the framework of socio-historical interpretation.

Through synthesising research from disparate areas of study, my research reveals a strong interconnectivity between the three variables: affective resonance and empathy, self and collective identity and historical understanding. The latter suggests that it is the intersecting suite of one's own personal narratives, comprising a person's chronological life narrative, and learning from the narratives of others which is responsible for the presence of and interconnectivity with affect, identity and historical interpretation.

The most significant interpretation of this research is that the self, which is essentially a conglomeration of memory and existing personal and experiential narratives, plays the dominant role in affective resonance and our understanding of and empathy for people, both similar and different, and the wider world. The self is also the lens through which we understand and relate to history and determines our role in its production and dissemination. The richer our understanding of self, others and our lived historical past the richer our retention and understanding of history is as we are empowered by the knowledge that we are the agents and subjects of historical narratives - that without our continued storytelling history will lose the rich patina and layers of lived experience which makes it relevant and resonant.

The capacity for empathy is determined by three factors: a naturally occurring neurological predisposition for mirroring, our exposure to narrative and experience, and our pre-existing 'sedimented' and diachronically evolving resonance.

Our pre-existing, yet malleable, neurological ability for empathy is akin to Muhlhoff's (2014) theory of activating resonance. Both our mirror neuron activation and our inner state of resonance exist in a latent state awaiting realisation through the process of 'brutal eruption' (Deleuze, as cited in Muhlhoff, 2014, p. 1012). This 'brutal eruption' results in felt resonance or mirrored empathy. Personal and fictional narratives have the capacity to be the force of 'realisation' which enliven potential resonance and mirror neuron activation. This process, generated by the recognition of universality and potential 'intimate public spheres' (Berlant, 2008), renders our resonant potential stronger than it was previously. Furthermore, Muhlhoff (2014) theorises that resonance also develops diachronically - reinforcing and adding to existing experienced states of resonance. Similarly each time we expose ourselves to narrative we build upon our established, yet often insubstantial, understanding of others and ourselves (Weinstein, 2007), and of the multitude of narrative and psychological possibilities in which we recognise ourselves. Coming to an understanding and acceptance of difference, as well as recognising that we belong to one or many 'intimate public spheres' via narrative, diachronically builds upon our internal affective resonance and its manifestation as both felt and expressed empathy.

Personal narratives are rich in potential for deep engagement, particularly for the, often difficult to grasp, internal lives of real people. As real life is 'full of complicated individuals whose inner lives are usually difficult to fathom' (Chiate, 2013), having had experience of making meaning from either fictional or nonfictional narratives assists with broadening our understanding of others via these virtual and artificial narratives. Exposure to narrative is highly advantageous to our social and empathic evolution, and provides us with a psychological roadmap to navigate the difficult terrain of humanity, allowing us deeper clarity of internal and external understanding.

Self-reflection and engaging with existing stories are fundamental to the process of meaning making. We flesh out the nebulous unknown of the current narrative and its characters, constructing narrative meaning and recognition. The narratives and characters become familiar and accepted rather than potentially remaining as 'the scorned other' (Keen, 2006). In the case of narratives of 'otherness', the recipients' neurological mirroring works in conversation with their pre-existing values, and

existing empathy to help deconstruct feelings of xenophobia (Gallese & Wojciehowski, 2011; Fiske, 2008; Manney, 2008).

Our ability to stand in the shoes of others and to cognitively and neurologically feel what others feel, even those who are outside our 'in-group', is generated by the continual reinforcement and refinement of ourselves and others through storytelling (Abrams, 2010; Sklar, 2009; Weinstein, 2007). This ability to relate and connect generates empathic feelings and understanding and has the capacity to deconstruct and disarm states of naturally occurring prejudice and xenophobia. The disarming of prejudice can produce altruistic and pro-social behaviours (Keen, 2006).

It appears that our ability to mine our own and others stories is also fundamental to our ability to comprehend socio-historical texts. When confronted with both official and vernacular narratives our desire for protagonist status often propagates self-reflection and memory recollection. As a result our own narratives and historical narratives fuse, creating new historical narratives in which we recognise ourselves as we are bound into the culture which is simultaneously bound into our consciousness (Brockmeier as cited in Kosyaeva, et al., 2002). This ability to see ourselves in the stories of others is vital in the context of interpretation which makes a call for empathy, understanding or for action.

The role of personal narratives in presenting reality as it was, history as it was lived and experienced by the people, produces universality, presenting a view that humans have agency within historical contexts. But beyond this recognition, personal narratives have the propensity for creating a different kind of historical content, where humans utilise the universal understanding and humility of real life stories, in transformative humanitarian ways often acting to disarm feelings of 'anti-tradition'. By developing perspective and understanding for the lives of others and their stories we are able to be part of a collective consciousness of socio-historical events and places. It is through this collectivity that the strength of Lauren Berlant's (2008) 'juxtapolitical' worlds can flourish.

Cultural institutions, as spaces of reflection and meaning making, have the potential through the use of oral narratives to become explosive in their resonant energy and

recognition - bringing history alive. As spaces of information dissemination and storytelling often through multi-media forms, art, objects, images, text they have the capacity to assist with the mapping of humanity, cultural understanding and to historical knowledge.

As a tool with advantageous positive cultural and social outcomes, personal narratives, particularly for institutions which serve as places of community storytelling, pastoral care or change-making, can be effective conveyors of intimate social histories and affect. By inserting these small everyday stories into the official histories, the role of institution as having purpose beyond ‘telling’ or ‘showing’ the public significant historical or creative works can be amplified (Thompson, 2009). As a contribution to contemporary museological scholarship the research demonstrates that first person narratives have multiple benefits in terms of visitor connectivity via affective resonance which has ongoing advantages to both individuals and wider society.

Personal narratives have multiple functions: as parables and moral tales, as methodological data, as enlightenment and illustration to embellish official historical narratives, or for pure emotional engagement to place audiences ‘in the shoes of people whose lives are completely foreign’ (Cohen, 2013, p. 156). The resonating familiarity of universality propagated by these narratives, speaks to us of collective voices and ‘small world’ stories like our own. Without narratives moulding and reiterating our inner-selves and forming consequent collective ‘intimate public spheres’ (Berlant, 2008), we would perhaps be at the mercy of the ‘bland and rootless present’ of modernity and consumer culture (Trueman, 1998, p. 41).

As an addition to current museological scholarship, this thesis has progressed ideas and concepts around the value of *why* we tell stories in institutions, *how* they affect us cognitively and neurologically and their ongoing positive impact upon visitors. Vernacular narratives possess the strength to convey affective resonance, emotion and texture of life as it actually is, the lived life of humans daily existence in all its complexity and success and joys as well as its daily dullness, its prejudices, its difficulty and isolation. The multiple benefits of personal narratives, as outlined in this thesis, illuminating the potentiality of a compassionate global citizenship where historical contexts represent people with dignity and agency (Berlant, 2008; Poletti,

2011). In order to counter modernities state of 'anti-tradition' personal narratives, driven by civic cultural institutions are a genre which can produce affective resonance via recognition and universality. As such they have the potential to ameliorate prejudice and drive transformative change between racial and political divides, social classes and generations.

Afterword

Vignette Two

The fear of 'others'

From the town we live in on the far eastern border of the Czech Republic we can walk to Poland, and bike to Slovakia, and it is 108km to Oświęcim (Polish) or אָשפּיטצין (Yiddish), a place more commonly known as Auschwitz (German). We are familiar with the train routes to the surrounding concentration camps, they were positioned here so far to the east as to not cause suspicion.

My husband recently visited the former Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp. On his return I asked what affected him the most. 'Was it the piles of shoes, the 'shower' blocks, the hair?' He answered bluntly, 'It was the photos of the families playing in the snow'. When I questioned him further he said, 'I could hardly look at them - their small kids on toboggans and they looked like our family photos' (A. J. M. Crawford, personal communication, April 2016). The photos functioned as visual narratives, telling the stories of families destroyed. It was the 'intimate public sphere' or universal narrative of family, of parenting, of togetherness created by these images that provided the affect - the recognition that they were 'just like us'. The image of the snow and toboggans had provided tangible links to our family life and to our children.

Without a connection to one's own life or to existing experiences of fictional narrative with similar themes, the affective resonance may not come so easily. It is the stories we know which provide the affective resonance when relating to the plight of others - we draw heavily from our cache of narratives which then generate affective resonance in these places or narratives of historical grief and trauma.

On reading *The Diary of Anne Frank*, my 11 year old daughter exclaimed how Anne thinks and feels like she does: about the boys at school, about who she does and doesn't like, about how she doesn't eat all her vegetables. I had assumed that I had adequately warned Rosa that Anne Frank had been a victim of the Holocaust, but when she read the final chapter she became extremely distraught, like I have never seen her. She

writhed on the ground sobbing and seemingly physically pained - presenting what could be described as a form of 'feeling of body' sensation. Sobbing and wailing 'she was my friend, I knew everything about her, more than her parents knew, how could they do that to her!' Rosa's relationship with Anne through her personal story was rich and deep and intimate and one which I believe taught Rosa an invaluable lesson about the universal human condition - the innate desire of every human being to be loved and to be safe. It also taught her the cruel potential of xenophobia and intolerance.

As an illustration of the key themes of this thesis Rosa's experience presented personal storytelling as rich in potential affective resonance, universality, humility, the capacity for breaking down intolerance and in its overriding potentiality for inciting positive humanitarian change.

Reference List

- Abrams, L. (2010). *Oral History Theory*. London / New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.
- Ammary, S. (2016). Modernist American fiction: trauma, healing and hope through memory. In Lytovka (Ed.). *The Place or Memory and the Memory of Place*. (pp. 156-179). Warsaw: European Interdisciplinary Foundation.
- Barne, G.R. (2006). *Telling Chinese Stories*. The China Story - Australian Center of China on the World. Retrieved from <http://www.thechinastory.org/yearbook/telling-chinese-stories/>
- Barnes, J. (2013). *Levels of Life*. London: Random House.
- Benjamin, W. (1936). The Storyteller. In Hale (Ed.). *The Novel: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory 1900 - 2000*. Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishing.
- Berlant, L. (1998). *Intimacy: A Special Issue*. In *Critical Inquiry*, 24(2), 281-288. The University of Chicago Press. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1344169>
- Berlant, L. (2008). *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Berman, M. (1992). Why Modernism Still Matters. In *Modernity and Identity*. Friedman & Lash (Eds.). London: Blackwell.
- Bluck, S. & Habermans, T. (2000). *Getting a life: The emergence of the life story in adolescence*. *Psychological Bulletin*, 126. (5), 748-769.

- Brecht, B. (1957). *Fear and Misery of the Third Reich*. London/New York: Bloomsbury.
- Butler, T. (2011). *The Historical Hearing Aid: Located Oral History from the Listener's Perspective*. In Trower (Ed). *Place, Writing, and Voice in Oral History*. (pp. 193-217). New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Cameron, F. (1995). Slices of Lives – Oral history programmes at The Science Centre and Manawatu Museum. *Oral History in New Zealand*. 7. pp.21-22.
- Cefalu, P. Kuchar, G. and Reynolds, B. (2014). *The Return of Theory in Early Modern English Studies*, Volume II. London: Palgrave McMillian.
- Chiaet, J. (2013). Novel Finding: Reading Literary Fiction Improves Empathy. *Scientific American*. Retrieved from <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/>
- Cohen, S. (2013). Shifting Questions: New Paradigms for Oral History in a Digital World. *Oral History Review*, 40 (1), pp. 154-167. Retrieved from <http://ohr.oxfordjournals.org/content/40/1/154.full.pdf+html>
- Coplan, A., & Goldie, P., (2011). *Empathy: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1093/mind/fzu106>
- Crawford, C. (personal communication, April 2016). Discussion about visit to concentration camps in Germany.
- Darian-Smith, K. (2008). Oral Histories of childhood and playlore: The Aboriginal Children's Play Project, Museum Victoria. *Aboriginal History*. 32. pp.146-150.
- De Certeau, M. (1984). *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley, California: University of California Press.

- Denzin, N., and Lincoln, Y. (2000). *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publishing. Retrieved from http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/13172_Chapter4.pdf
- Ernest, H. (1929). *Farewell to Arms*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Field, S. (2008). Imagining Communities: Memory, Loss, and Resilience in Post-Apartheid Cape Town. In Hamilton & Shopes (Eds), In *Oral History and Public Memory*. (pp. 107-125). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Fiske, S.T, (2008). Look Twice. In *Greater Good in Action, Science-based Practices for a Meaningful life*. University of California, Berkeley. Retrieved from http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/look_twice
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five misunderstandings about case-study research. *Qualitative Inquiry*. 12(2), pp. 219-245.
- Gallese, V., Eagle, M. & Migone. (2007). Intentional Attunement: Mirror Neurons and the Neural Underpinnings of Interpersonal Relations. *Psychoanalysis Association*, 55(1), 131-76.
- Gallese, V. (2011). Embodied Simulation Theory: Imagination and Narrative, In *Neuropsychanalysis*, 13 (2), 196-200.
- Gallese, V. and Wojciehowski, H. (2011). How Stories Make Us Feel: Toward an Embodied Narratology. *California Italian Studies*. 2(1).1-35. Retrieved from <http://escholarship.org/uc/item/3jg726c2>
- Gao, M. (2008). *The Battle for China's Past - Mao and the Cultural Revolution*. London: Pluto Press.
- Goldie, P. (2009). Narrative Thinking, Emotion, and Planning. In *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. Special Issue: The Poetics Aesthetics, and

- Philosophy of Narrative. 67(1), 97–106. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40206393>
- Gottschall, J. (2012). *The Storytelling Animal. How Stories make us Human*. Boston / New York: Mariner Books.
- Graves, C. (2014). What the Vulcan Mind can teach us. In *Institute for Public Relations. Ogilvy Public Relations*. Retrieved from <http://www.instituteforpr.org/wp-content/uploads/IPR-Blog-Graves-Behavioral-Comms-Part-3.pdf>
- Green, A. (1997). Returning History to the Community: Oral History in a Museum Setting. *The Oral History Review*. 24(2). Winter. pp. 53-72.
- Grimshaw, C. (2015). Elena Ferrante, Finlay Macdonald, and Me, Me, Me – An Essay by Charlotte Grimshaw. *The Spinoff*. Retrieved from <http://thespinoff.co.nz/28-10-2015/books-elena-ferrante-finlay-macdonald-and-me-me-me-an-essay-by-charlotte-grimshaw/>
- Halbwachs, M. (1950). *The Collective Memory*. New York: Harper & Row Colophon Books.
- Hall, L. (2010). The Storyteller. In *The Modernism Lab*, Yale University. Retrieved from https://modernism.research.yale.edu/wiki/index.php/The_Storyteller
- Hamilton, P., & Shopes, L. (2008). *Oral history and Public Memories*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Haven, K.F. (2007). *Story Proof: The Science Behind the Startling Power of Story*. London: Greenwood Publishing.
- Henderson, L. (2013). *Love and Money: Queers, Class and Cultural Production*. New York: New York University Press.

- Hess, M. (2012). Mirror Neurons, the Development of Empathy, and digital Storytelling. *Religious Education*. 107 (4). 401-414.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2012.699412>
- High Street Stories* (n.d.). Website. Received from [www.highstreetstories.co.nz /](http://www.highstreetstories.co.nz/).
- High Street Stories* (n.d.). Augmented Reality app. Downloaded from Google Play Store.
- Humans of New York*. (n.d.). Facebook. Retrieved from
<https://www.facebook.com/humansofnewyork/>
- Hochschild, A.R. (2016). *Strangers in their own Land: Anger and Mourning on the American Right*. New York: New Press.
- Hornstein, S. (2013). *Losing Site*. Surrey, England / Burlington, U.S.A: Ashgate Studies in Architecture.
- Indiana University. (2015). Marginalized groups use the Internet to broaden their networks, rather than reinforce ties. *ScienceDaily*. Retrieved from
www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/11/151116152215.htm
- Jones, O. (2016). Black Mirror is an urgent reminder of the fatal consequences of empathy loss. Refugee Crisis, Opinion Piece. *The Guardian* online. 28 October 2016. Retrieved from
<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/oct/28/black-mirror-empathy-shared-humanity>.
- Joyce, J. (1922). *Ulysses*. Paris: Shakespeare & Co, Paris.
- Keen, S. (2006). A Theory of Narrative Empathy. *Narrative*, 14(3). pp. 207–236.
Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20107388>

- Kennett, T. (2013). *Shooting the China Jerries*. Retrieved from [http://www.highstreetstories.co.nz/stories/77-shooting-the-china-jerries-\(peepots\)](http://www.highstreetstories.co.nz/stories/77-shooting-the-china-jerries-(peepots)).
- Kennett, T. (2013) *We did a lot of odd repairs*. Retrieved from <http://www.highstreetstories.co.nz/stories/76-we-did-do-a-lot-of-odd-repairs-%E2%80%A6>
- Kong, S. (2013). *Christchurch 90s Rave Scene*. Retrieved from <http://www.highstreetstories.co.nz/stories/4-christchurch%E2%80%99s-90s-rave-scene>
- Koopman, E.M.E. (2015). Empathic reactions after reading: The role of genre, personal factors and affective responses. *Poetics*. April, 2015. 50. 62–79. Retrieved from www.elsevier.com/locate/poetic
- Kosyaveva, T. Y., Rowe, S.M. and Wertsch, J.V. (2002). Linking Little Narratives to Big Ones: Narrative and Public Memory in History Museums. *Culture and Psychology*. 8(1). 96-112. doi: 10.1177/1354067X02008001621
- Makagon, D., & Neumann, M. (2008). *Recording Culture: Audio Documentary and the Ethnographic Experience*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications.
- Manney, P.J. (2008). *Empathy in the Time of Technology: How Storytelling is the Key to Empathy*. *Journal of Evolution and Technology*. 19 (1). 51-61. Retrieved from <http://web.b.ebscohost.com/>
- Manney, P.J. (2016). Is Technology Destroying Empathy? (Op-Ed). *Yahoo News*. Retrieved from <https://www.yahoo.com/news/technology-destroying-empathy-op-ed-152113978.html?ref=gs>
- Mason, C. (2013). *Human Feelings Embodied in Concrete*. Retrieved from <http://www.highstreetstories.co.nz/stories/6-human-feelings-embodied-in-concrete>

- Mason, J. (2006). *Real Life Methods Working Papers: Six strategies for mixing methods and linking data*. Retrieved from http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/482/1/0406_six%2520strategies%2520for%2520mixing%2520methods.pdf
- McCabe, E. (2011). Depressive Realism: An Interview with Lauren Berlant. *The Hypocrite Reader*. Issue 5. Realism. Retrieved from <http://hypocritereader.com/contributor/earl-mccabe/>
- McKay, B. & K. (2014). Love is all you need - Insights from the longest longitudinal study on men ever conducted. *The Art of Manliness*. Retrieved from <http://www.artofmanliness.com/2014/09/02/love-is-all-you-need-insights-from-the-longest-logitudinal-sstudy-on-men-ever-conducted/>
- Moore, R.K. (2009). The Enlightenment and the Industrial Revolution. *Serendipity*. Retrieved from http://www.serendipity.li/capitalism/enlightenment_and_industrial_revolution.html
- Mühlhoff, R. (2015). Affective Resonance and Social Interaction. *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*. 14 (4). 1001-1019. doi:10.1007/s11097-014-9394-7
- Munslow, A. (2012). *A history of history*. New York: Routledge.
- Oppenheimer, R. (1965). *The Decision to Drop the Bomb*. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lb13ynu3Iac>. 06.04.15.
- Pence, J. (2004). Narrative emotion: feeling, form and function. *Journal of Narrative Theory*. 34(3). 273–6. Department of English: Eastern Michigan University, United States of America.
- Polkinghorne, Donald E. (1991). Narrative and self-concept. *Journal of Narrative & Life History*, 1(2-3).135-153. doi.org/10.1075/jnlh.1.2-3.04nar

- Poletti, A. (2011). Coaxing an intimate public: Life narrative in digital storytelling. *Continuum Journal of Media and Cultural Studies*. 25(1). 73-83.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10304312.2010.506672>
- Portelli, A. (15.10.2015). *Badlands: Springsteen and America, work and dreams*. Dit' e Nat' Kosovo Oral History. Retrieved from
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bO0jrpfORL8>
- Qualitative Research, Guidelines Project. (n.d). Robert John Wood Johnson Foundation.
Retrieved from <http://www.qualres.org/HomeSemi-3629.html>
- Ramachandran, V. S. (2013). "Gandhi Neurons". The Fascinating Connections Between Brains. In *Being Human*. Retrieved from
www.beinghuman.org/article/v-s-ramachandran-gandhi-neurons
- Roland, Z. (2016). There's nothing to see here: Capturing Memories of Place through Memoryscapes. In *The Place or Memory and the Memory of Place*. 156-179. Warsaw: European Interdisciplinary Foundation.
- Schwandt, T.A. (2011). Case Study Research. In *The SAGE Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry*. DOI <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/0781412986281>
- Seidman, I (1998). Technique isn't everything, but it is a lot. In *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press. Retrieved from
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Content_analysis
- Shuman, A. (2005). *Other People's Stories: Entitlement Claims and the Critique of Empathy*. University of Illinois Press. Retrieved from
<http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.massey.ac.nz/stable/10.5406/j.ctt1xcfrh>
- Simons, H. (2010). Whose Data are they? Ethics in Case Study Research. In *Case Study Research in Practice*. 96 - 111. London: SAGE publishing Ltd.

- Sklar, H. (2009). Believable Fictions: On the Nature of Emotional Responses to Fictional Characters. *Emotions: Implications for Literary, Linguistic and Translation Studies*. 5. The Electronic Journal of the Department of English at the University of Helsinki. Retrieved from <http://blogs.helsinki.fi/hes-eng/volumes/volume-5/believable-fictions-on-the-nature-of-emotional-responses-to-fictional-characters-howard-sklar/>
- Smith, J.A. (2016). Why We Need Empathy in the Age of Trump. *Greater Good in Action, Science-based Practices for a Meaningful life*. University of California, Berkeley. Retrieved from http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why_we_need_empathy_in_the_age_of_trump?
- Spalding, R. (2015). The Communist Manifesto. *History Today*. Retrieved from <http://www.historytoday.com/roger-spalding/communist-manifesto>
- Stewart, P. (2013). *The Birth of Alice*. High Street Stories. Retrieved from <http://www.highstreetstories.co.nz/stories/59-the-birth-of-alice>
- Swift, P. (2010). *The 'Perils of the Nation': The Activist Anthropology of Henry Mayhew*. Open Anthropology Cooperative. Retrieved from <http://openanthcoop.ning.com/profiles/blogs/the-perils-of-the-nation-the>
- Thompson, P. (2009). *The Voice of the Past* (3rd ed.), New York: Oxford University Press.
- Trouillot, M.R. (1995). *Silencing the Past, power and the production of history*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Trueman, C. (1998). Reckoning With The Past in an Anti-Historical Age. *Themelios*. 23 (2). 5-21. Retrieved from http://biblicalstudies.org.uk/article_past_trueman.html
- Van Stralen, H. (2005). *Autobiography and Modernism. Choices and Conflict: Essays on Literature and Existentialism*. Brussels: Peter Lang Publishing.

Weinstein, A. (2007). *Recovering your Story: Proust, Joyce, Woolf, Faulkner, Morrison*. London / New York: Random House Publishing Group.

Whitenton, M. R., (2017). *Hearing Kyriotic Sonship: A Cognitive and Rhetorical Approach to the Characterization of Mark's Jesus*. Leiden, Boston: Brill

Wisker, G. (2007). *Choosing appropriate Methodologies*.
<http://www.palgrave.com/studentstudyskills/page/choosing-appropriate-research-methodologies>

Woolf, V. (1929). *A Room of One's Own*. London: Hogarth Press.

Yin, R. (1994). *Case Study Research, Design and Methods*. (4th ed.), London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Participant Interviews

McNaught, I. personal communication, May 15, 2016, Interviewed by Zoe Roland.
Christchurch New Zealand

Modar, A. personal communication, May 15, 2016, Interviewed by Zoe Roland.
Ostrava, Czech Republic

Roberts, G. personal communication, May 15, 2016, Interviewed by Zoe Roland.
Christchurch New Zealand

Weiss, S. personal communication, May 15, 2016, Interviewed by Zoe Roland.
Christchurch New Zealand

APPENDICES



MASSEY UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
TE KURA PŪKENGĀ TANGATA

**School of People, Environment and Planning
Massey University. Private Bag 11 222
Palmerston North 4442. New Zealand**

**Zoe Roland
30 Dubna, 3128 2B / 607
Ostrava 1. Czech Republic 702 00
Ph: +420773648307
E: eozroland@yahoo.com**

Kia ora,

I'm currently completing my Masters in Museum Studies extramurally through Massey University. The title of my thesis is *Creating a deeper experience of identity, humanity and historical understanding through the interpretative use of socio-historical personal narratives*. The thesis will focus on the ways in which personal narratives used in socio-historical and cultural interpretation provide listeners with a deeper experience of personal identity, humanity (emotion ie. 'affect') and historical knowledge and understanding.

Abstract: As the world plunges further into the depths of what theologian Dr. Carl Trueman would call, a modern state of 'anti-tradition', humans need to embrace and utilise strategies which create and impart empathy and 'affect'. I propose that through the use of aural personal narratives in spaces of cultural and historical interpretation, museums can create 'affect' and civic empowerment. The phenomena of 'affect' as a result of both listening and telling has the capacity to build and sustain collectivity as well as personal identity within geographic space. These stories also have the ability to nourish a sense of humanity and provide historical knowledge and understanding through the voice of a civic collectivity.

I would like to invite you to participate in a qualitative study analyzing the Christchurch High Street Stories website and augmented reality app (www.highstreetstories.co.nz).

I have recruited three participants; one member of the Christchurch heritage community, one who has strong links to Christchurch's High Street precinct and one who has neither of these associations with the geographic area of study.

I require participants to become familiar with the website, in terms of its content and how it makes you feel and think, rather than its functionality or navigability. I will provide you a list of questions but would also ask that you observe and record your own thoughts, actions and feelings while browsing and listening to selected stories.

I would also like, if possible, for you to visit the High Street in Christchurch and listen to selected stories from the google play store app on an android phone or tablet - analysis of this is not an integral part of my study but will provide useful information/data to contrast with the non site-specific data.

After you have submitted the material to me in written form I will follow up with a Skype conversation to discuss the answers and the experience in general, this may take 30-40minutes. The entire research time for each participant should be approximately 2 - 3 hours over a two week period.

The research data will be used for the thesis but also possibly publications or presentations arising from the research. Permission will be sought for this purpose. I will collect and store all the data in password protected computer files. This data will be confidential.

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to: decline to answer any particular question; withdraw from the study (no later than May 1st 2016); ask any questions about the study at any time during participation; provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher; be given access to a summary of the project findings.

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher, Zoe Roland is responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher, please contact Dr Brian Finch, Director, Research Ethics, telephone 06 356 9099 x 86015, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

In the unlikely event that physical injury results from your participation in this study, you should visit a treatment provider to make a claim to ACC as soon as possible. ACC cover and entitlements are not automatic and your claim will be assessed by ACC in accordance with the Accident Compensation Act 2001. If your claim is accepted, ACC must inform you of your entitlements, and must help you access those entitlements. Entitlements may include, but not be limited to, treatment costs, travel costs for rehabilitation, loss of earnings, and/or lump sum for permanent impairment. Compensation for mental trauma may also be included, but only if this is incurred as a result of physical injury.

If your ACC claim is not accepted you should immediately contact the researcher. The researcher will initiate processes to ensure you receive compensation equivalent to that to which you would have been entitled had ACC accepted your claim.

Please do not hesitate to contact either Susan Abasa or myself if you have any questions about the project.

Project Contacts

Student: Zoe Roland

eo Roland@yahoo.com / +420773648307

Supervisor: Susan Abasa

School People, Environment and Planning

S.F.Abasa@massey.ac.nz

+6463505799 x 83658

I will be in touch with you within the next week to see if you are interested and able to participate.

Kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Zoe Roland', written in a cursive style.

Zoe Roland



MASSEY UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
TE KURA PŪKENGA TANGATA

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - INDIVIDUAL

Creating a deeper experience of identity, humanity and historical knowledge and understanding through the interpretative use of socio-historical personal narratives.

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I wish/do not wish to have data placed in an official archive.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature:

Date:

.....

Full Name - printed

.....

Te Kunenga
ki Pūrehuroa

School of People, Environment & Planning

Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand. T +64 6 350 4343 F +64 6 350 5737. <http://pep.massey.ac.nz>

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONS

The affective resonance of personal narratives:

Creating a deeper experience of identity, empathy and historical understanding

Thank you for taking part in this qualitative study. As explained in the introductory letter the exercise should take no longer than 2-3 hours. Below is a list of the clips I would like you to listen to, information and a set of questions.

Please read all of the questions first. While listening to the stories have a notebook handy so you can write down your immediate feelings, thoughts and observations about a particular story and the collection of stories below.

Please become familiar with the website as a whole (www.highstreetstories.co.nz) and the collection of stories under the different themes: *Culture, Trade, Archaeology, Ngai Tahu History, Social History, Architectural Heritage, Red Light District, Yarns*. I'm aware that the stories are very diverse hence asking you questions about the 'collection' of stories rather than each individual story. You will probably have different responses to each story due to the varying qualities of the telling, level of emotion, engagement and their relevance to you personally. Please do refer to individual stories where you can as I'm interested in what aspects of the stories create affect (feeling) and memory recall. Please make links to your personal life in relation to the story material if it is relevant and is a catalyst for memory or affect.

Please be as honest as you can in answering. If your feelings and thoughts contradict my hypothesis / research question that is perfectly fine, please try to explain why you think this is. I have chosen stories which are experiences and recollections of local people in keeping with my area of study, 'personal narratives'. Most of the stories are about 2 minutes with the longest at 4 ½ minutes.

If you do wish to listen on site (which is not essential) - please download the app. from Google Playstore (android only) *High Street Stories*. The app. has augmented reality and shorter 30sec sound bytes as well as the longer versions of each story.

Questions;

Identity / Self / Collectivity

1. After listening to the stories were you aware of feeling part of a collectivity of people in Christchurch before the earthquakes? Has that feeling changed after listening?
2. Did listening to any of the stories change how you think of yourself in terms of being 'a Cantabrian' or a 'New Zealander' or any other collectivity in anyway? Please elaborate.
3. Further to the last question did listening Increase your sense of 'rootedness' or connection to the city or its people.
4. Can you explain any other connections the stories made to your sense of self?

Humanity / Agency

5. When you hear stories of your wider community like these do they make you feel less isolated and more connected to a greater community which you can access?
6. At any point did you feel empathic or any other emotional connection to toward the narrators, or to 'people like them'?
7. Did you hear anything which you recognised in terms of the characters or narrator having similar experiences or thoughts to you about anything in particular?
8. How do you think this collection would be perceived if the stories consisted of narratives of regret and sadness? It was a conscious decision not to include these kinds of narratives but I wonder how differently listeners would have felt if the stories had this element of emotion within them (eg. QuakeStories). Do you think it would have been more affecting if the stories of life before the quakes had narratives of sadness and loss woven into them?
9. Does the collection of stories make you feel anything toward the governmental powers which allowed the erasure of the areas architecture after the earthquakes?

10. If you answered yes to the last question would listening to these stories stir you to participate in political action relating to the retention of buildings or a community?

Historical Understanding

11. Did listening to the stories told from a personal narrative perspective help you with understanding the history of the High Street Precinct and Christchurch better - please elaborate on how and why you think this was. Refer to individual stories if you can.

12. Further to the last question what aspects of history were embellished or enhanced or were totally new for you through listening. How does this change your perspective on the area and Christchurch.

Miscellaneous Questions

13. Is there anything else you would like to say about how the collection made you feel or think differently about the community, yourself or the history of the area.

14. What was your favorite story - why?

Stories:

Red Light District

<http://www.highstreetstories.co.nz/stories/3a-murders-and-fire-bombings>

[http://www.highstreetstories.co.nz/stories/2-a-world-first-the-prostitution-reform-act-\(2003\)](http://www.highstreetstories.co.nz/stories/2-a-world-first-the-prostitution-reform-act-(2003))

Architectural Heritage

<http://www.highstreetstories.co.nz/stories/6-human-feelings-embodied-in-concrete>

<http://www.highstreetstories.co.nz/stories/7-the-demolition-of-the-wiltshire-building>

<http://www.highstreetstories.co.nz/stories/24-%E2%80%98the-smell-of-death%E2%80%99-carcasses-to-couture>

Social History

<http://www.highstreetstories.co.nz/stories/72-poplar-lane-recollections>

<http://www.highstreetstories.co.nz/stories/78-raiding-the-excelsior>

<http://www.highstreetstories.co.nz/stories/46-the-famous-cotura-children%E2%80%99s-duffel-coat>

Culture

<http://www.highstreetstories.co.nz/stories/44-people-were-much-more-colourful-then>

<http://www.highstreetstories.co.nz/stories/57-block-of-wood-the-bats>

<http://www.highstreetstories.co.nz/stories/4-christchurch%E2%80%99s-90s-rave-scene>

Yarns

<http://www.highstreetstories.co.nz/stories/15-human-ashes-out-and-about-on-high-street>

Regeneration

<http://www.highstreetstories.co.nz/stories/16-the-new-high-street-the-early-1990s>

<http://www.highstreetstories.co.nz/stories/26-high-street-underbelly-pushers-to-posh>

Image Consent

Guy Frederick

Guy Frederick <guyfrederick@paradise.net.nz>

To

Zoe Roland

16 October 2016 7:32

Hello - please accept this as formal notification for permission to Zoe Roland for inclusion of my photos created for the High Street Stories article (in Heritage NZ) for use in her MA Thesis.

Thanks

Guy

www.guyfrederick.com

0276793523

Becker Fraser Photos

Moira Fraser <moirafrasernz@gmail.com>

To

Zoe Roland

16/12/15 at 9:03 AM

Yes that's fine Zoe. That was the point of the National Library sponsoring the project, so that the photos were available for these kind of purposes. They are published under a creative commons license, both by the National Library and Ross, so please just acknowledge the photographer.

Regards

Moira

Moira Fraser

IPU International Parliamentary Specialist

UNDP/IPU Parliamentary Support Programme

Ph: +95-9-4210-22562

Email: moirafrasernz@gmail.com or mfr@ipu.org

