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Deconstructing Narrative Therapy in Practice

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Abstract

Narrative therapists have made claims as to how a narrative interview or series of interviews should be best structured. This thesis shows, through the analysis of a narrative interview, that these claims represent the practice of narrative therapy. However, several processes that narrative therapists have not explicitly noted as being critical for the successful attainment of the goals of this approach, have emerged as being of fundamental importance. These are the use of positioning, metaphor, indirectness and scaffolding. Their importance lies in that they facilitate an alliance between therapist and client and also minimise the possibility of opposition to the therapeutic process. In addition, they maximise the potential for the development and acceptance of alternative conceptualisations of the self and reality. Furthermore, they actively engage the person in the co-construction of meaning. This increases the likelihood that the newly constructed narrative will be conceptualised as reflecting reality, and as a consequence of this, that it will be acted on as such.

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Chapter One

Introduction: Narrative Therapy and Theory

Narrative therapy is informed by theories of reality and personhood that are distinctly different from the positivism and empiricism of mainstream psychology. The assumptions upon which traditional psychology is based are that reality is fixed and can be observed directly, and that it is possible to discover the rules and laws that determine human behaviour. The person is typically seen as having an essential, unitary, inner self, made up of personality characteristics and attributes. Furthermore, this individual is considered to be self-determining (Gergen, 1985). In contrast to this, the premises on which narrative therapy is based are that identity and reality, or what it is possible for us to know of reality, are not only socially mediated, but are in fact constituted in discourse (White & Epston, 1990).

In this first section of the introduction, I propose to look at the theoretical sources that narrative therapy draws from. These include systems theory, feminist analysis, cross-cultural investigations, social constructionism, which includes both deconstructionism and knowledge and power analysis, and narratology (White & Epston, 1990). Following this, I draw from the theoretical accounts of narrative therapy to set out the structure of a narrative interview and define the main terms used in narrative therapy. From here, I move on to consider the importance of the therapeutic relationship in providing a context in which therapy takes place. In the final section of the introduction, I examine the relationship between the theoretical sources which narrative therapy draws from and accounts that have been given of the practice of narrative therapy.

Systems Theory

Systems theory has focused on the individual as part of a social system rather than as an autonomous individual acting in isolation from others. A social system is considered to have properties of its own, having evolved a set of rules and being rich in assigned and ascribed roles for its members. It has an organised power structure, and over time has developed complex, implicit and explicit forms of communication and ways of negotiating and problem solving which allow for the effective performance of tasks. The relationship between members of any culture is thought to be deep and multilayered, and is based on a shared history, shared internalised perceptions and assumptions about the world, and in smaller groups, a shared purpose (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 1991). This would suggest that it is relationships between individuals within the system and relationships or interactions between systems, rather than the individual itself that regulate human behaviour. Consequently, in systems approaches, problems are located within relationships rather than in the individual. Individuals are not independent of the social system but are influenced by and act within the context of this system. While a subsystem may consist of only two members, these subsystems exist within family or small group systems, which in turn exist within larger cultural/societal systems. Though systems theory assumes that there are rules and laws that govern these systems, it also locates the individual within a social context, which is deemed to be a complex societal system in which prescribed roles and rules influence behaviour. Similarly, narrative therapists consider persons to be primarily social beings (White & Epston, 1990). Thus, narrative therapy situates persons and the problems they present with in the social context in which they are embedded.

Feminist Analysis

Feminist theory locates individuals within a gendered culture, which influence beliefs and attitudes regarding women and consequently limits and constrains them. Further, cultural views about gender also shape psychological knowledge and practice (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1994). This can be seen in the way that gender attributes ascribed to females and problems encountered by them are more likely to be pathologised (Hare-Mustin & Marecek, 1988, cited in Gergen & Kaye, 1992). For example, women with bulimia or anorexia nervosa are perceived as having something wrong with them. An alternative perception regarding this issue might be that there is something seriously wrong with a society in which women are expected to live up to unhealthy ideals about what they should be, while simultaneously being denied the potential for growth in other areas. Feminist analysis suggests that power is used to maintain dominance over women in patriarchal societies and that men are advantaged by this marginalisation of women. While feminists differ in their views regarding reality and the self, they agree that women's lives are embedded within a cultural context and that this cultural context has allowed men the power of definition over their lives (Weedon, 1997). In narrative therapy, gendered practices and the assumptions that underlie them are exposed. Where these practices are limiting or destructive, they are challenged and alternative ways of being are explored (White & Epston, 1990).

Cross-Cultural Investigations

Cross-cultural investigations also demonstrate the importance of culture to how we experience the world and act in relation to it. While Western culture typically views psychology through a positivist framework, issues of identity and reality are often perceived differently in other cultures (Lock, 1981). The world that we are born into, its cultural institutions, historical

understandings, knowledge of how the world works etc., combine to produce the socialisation process that we are subjected to (Burr, 1995; Weedon, 1997). Culture is constitutive of the behavioural environment and also provides the basic orientations that structure the world, as it is constituted. These orientations include self and object, spatio-temporal, motivational, and normative orientations. While individuals in all cultures orient themselves to their behavioural environment, distinctions between what is perceived to be part of or outside of the self; concepts of time; motivators of behaviour; and norms; as well as the degree to which one is perceived as being able to control one's environment rather than be controlled by it, are culturally and historically dependent (Lock, 1981). Cross-cultural investigations therefore support the idea of culturally mediated conceptualisations of identity and reality. In doing so, they have led narrative therapists to consider the importance of avoiding positioning themselves as experts and, thus, as able to determine what is best for others (White & Epston, 1990; Winslade, Crocket & Monk, 1997). In addition, they have led to the consideration of culturally appropriate ways of working with clients.

Social Constructionism

In social constructionism, the person and his or her identity is considered to be a product of the prevailing narratives and discourses that are socially and culturally available. Identities, experiences and life events are thought to become meaningful through these narratives and discourses. Subjectivity is considered to be the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, their sense of self, and ways of understanding their relationship to the world. It is assumed that subjectivity is precarious, contradictory and subject to change, in that it is constantly being reconstituted through discourse (Burr, 1995; Weedon, 1997). Shotter (1984)

suggests that people owe their apparent stability and uniqueness to the stability and constancy of aspects of their world and the ways in which they can make their difference from those around them known and accountable. Thus, historical understandings, internalised perceptions, assumptions about the world and the behavioural expectations that are shared by particular cultures allow us to perceive ourselves and our world as stable. Social constructionism includes both knowledge and power analysis and deconstructionism. Amongst the common factors in the analysis of individual consciousness, power, social meanings and social organisation is language. It is in language that actual and potential forms of social organisation and their social and political consequences are defined and contested. Through social interaction, in learning the linguistic processes of thought and speech, we are enabled to give meaning to things by drawing on the particular ways of understanding the world that we have access to. As language enables us it also constrains us by providing the framework through which we interpret and understand our experiences. In offering a range of ways of interpreting our lives, it is claimed that there are available to us different versions of experience. The plurality of language and the impossibility of fixing meaning once and for all are the basic principles of social constructionism (Burr, 1995; Weedon, 1997), and it is from these principles that narrative therapy has developed.

Deconstructionism

Derrida (1974) considers all social practices to be not simply mediated by language, but constituted in and through language. He aims to deconstruct the concepts of identity and hierarchy by challenging the logic on which hierarchies and binary oppositions are based. He argues that what we presume to be present is constituted through something that is a non-present difference, suggesting along with Bateson (1972), that in language there is

only difference. Thus, words take their meaning from their relationship to other words rather than from anything intrinsic to that which they represent. The meaning of a word is found in all those things that are thought to be different from it. Thus the meaning of man is defined by what is not woman. All binary oppositions such as this are hierarchical and consequently, one is privileged over the other. Phonocentrism, for example, is seen to privilege speech over writing and in doing so Derrida argues, also privileges presence over absence (1974). This privileging of presence over absence is reflected in the status that science affords to observable phenomena (Sampson, 1989). Derrida reveals the operations in language through the process of deconstruction in which any story is perceived to be incomplete and fragmented. In every story there is always, of necessity, more left out than included, and what is included is a function of the narrator's assumptions and beliefs. Deconstruction refers to the taking apart of texts to identify how they have been constructed in such a way as to determine the particular images presented of people and their actions and to omit others (Derrida, 1974).

The use of metaphor is one of the primary ways in which we create images. The essence of metaphor is understanding and experiencing one thing in terms of another. Our conceptual system is fundamentally metaphorical. Thus, the way we think, what we experience and what we do every day will be determined in part by the metaphors we use. These allow us to make sense of our experience by providing a coherent structure for it. In providing a framework with which to make sense of our experience, those aspects of the concept that are not consistent with the metaphor that is being used are concealed. Consequently, metaphors have the capacity to alter our perceptions and experiences. We define reality in terms of metaphors and then proceed to act on the basis of this metaphorically defined reality

(Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Metaphors facilitate in both the organising and the remembering of information. They also allow us to see the multilayered nature of 'reality' more easily and to take alternative perspectives. The ability to recognise metaphor enables the identification of that which is not immediately present in language. Biases, concealed associations and implications, and the reification of concepts can be brought to the fore through a close examination of the particular metaphors used (Rosenblatt, 1994). The identification and examination of metaphor is consequently useful if not essential to the process of deconstruction. From deconstructionism, narrative therapy takes the idea that one can only understand the particular stories people tell about their lives by considering what it is that these stories exist in relationship to.

Derrida and Foucault both seek to uncover that which is not immediately apparent in language. While Derrida seeks to understand the hierarchies constituted by presence and absence of words, Foucault considers alternative knowledges.

Knowledge and Power Analysis

Foucault (1980), a social historian and philosopher argued that the self was constructed as the subject and object of discourse at a particular historical juncture. He considered knowledge and power to be inseparable, with dominant knowledge being that which is perceived as an 'objective reality' and he reasoned that persons are subject to power through the discourses or knowledges that constitute their lives. Foucault distinguished between two classes of subjugated knowledge; the first being previously held knowledges written out of history as newer global knowledges gained the power of objective reality. The second class of subjugated knowledge is local knowledge. These are the alternative knowledges that are marginalised.

Knowledge is full of contradictions, differences in interpretation and conflicts of interest. It is these contradictions or differing interpretations available that provide the potential for persons to escape the dominant discourses that constitute their lives. While knowledge is defined by individuals, what is seen to count as knowledge is defined by discourse. Power differences are reflected in who gets to speak and what it is that they are able to say. Through an analysis of knowledge and power, Foucault aimed to create a history of the different modes of culture through which humans are made subjects.

Foucault identified three modes of objectification, which extended the social control of persons through the specifying of identity. The first mode he considered to be a dividing practice whereby individuals were divided into social groups according to difference and then separated or otherwise treated differently for exhibiting these differences (Foucault, 1965). The second mode of objectification is scientific classification (Foucault, 1973). The classification and detailing of individual differences and the invention of the file facilitated social control of the individual. The third mode of objectification was the procedure by which humans turn themselves into subjects through processes of self-formation or identity in which the person is active (Foucault, 1979).

The third mode of objectification can be illustrated by the use of the Panopticon as a model (Foucault, 1979). Designed to ensure maximum control of the individual it consisted of a tower in the centre of a courtyard surrounded by a ring shaped building; from the tower occupants of the surrounding building could be observed. The rooms in this building had large windows at the front and were backlighted to ensure full view of the occupant. As occupants of these rooms had no way of knowing whether

they were being watched at any specific time, they consequently acted as though they were in fact being constantly monitored. The Panopticon promoted internalisation of what Foucault referred to as the “externalised cultural gaze” that we are all subjected to, recruiting us into taking an active part in our own subjugation. This model provides a means by which individuals could be subjected to meticulous examination while remaining totally isolated from others, thus preventing access to any alternative knowledges.

Foucault (1979) suggested that the self is constituted in discourse when a person takes up a subject position made available within that particular discourse. Subject positions are always in relation to other people (Harre & van Langenhove, 1999). In taking up a particular subject position a limited range of ways of being are made available, along with specific rights and responsibilities (Davies & Harre, 1990). Positioning involves the discursive construction of personal stories that make a person's actions comprehensible as social acts, both to themselves and to others (Harre & van Langenhove, 1999).

Fundamental to positioning theory is the idea that "words are deeds" (Wittgenstein, 1953). With words we account for our actions; express doubt; blame others; and protest at unfairness. In short, with words we position ourselves and others (Harre & van Langenhove, 1999). In speaking we perform a social action (Austin, 1962), and it is through this social interaction that the self emerges (Harre & van Langenhove, 1999). The self is not fixed, but rather is constituted and reconstituted through participating in discourse. The sort of person one is depends upon the positions available to be taken up in one's own and other's discursive practices. The constitutive force of each discursive practice lies in its provision of subject positions.

Because meaning is socially negotiated, the potential for rejecting the way one is positioned and acting flexibly always exists, but once a subject position is taken up the person will generally conceive of the world in terms of the particular images, metaphors, storylines and concepts made relevant by this discourse. Furthermore, the person's actions will be determined to a large extent by this particular conceptualisation of both themselves and reality (Davies & Harre, 1990).

Harre and van Langenhove (1999) differentiate between personal identity or sense of self and what they refer to as "personas". Personal identity is both experienced as stable and linked with a sense of personal agency. They suggest that personal identity is no more than a structural or organisational feature of a person's mentality. While thoughts and feelings can be organised into a coherent whole, the self of personal identity remains intact. The selves that are publicly presented in social interaction which are made up of consistent and comprehensible groupings of characteristics, they have termed personas. One's persona can only enter social space and become a 'reality' to the extent that others recognise, respond to and confirm the existence of this self. It is only with the co-operation of others that persons can be constructed. Consequently, the response of others to a given persona has profound effects on both the way in which a person's behaviour is viewed and how they are then treated. From positioning theory and knowledge and power analysis, comes an awareness of the existence of alternative knowledges and the importance of accessing these if alternative subject positions are to be made available to be taken up.

Social constructionist theory has been used to highlight the contribution of the mental health profession to the increase of psychological problems in society (Gergen, 1990). The language of psychological deficiency has been

objectified, leading us to believe that these concepts are real things rather than simply concepts. The language of mental deficiency leads to the internalisation of problems and a consequence of this is that persons do not look outside of themselves to society for either cause or solution. Persons are held responsible for the problems they experience and are expected to change themselves, in spite of the fact that the unitary, essential self assumed to exist by mental health professionals does not easily lend itself to change. This focus on altering the self to fit in society results in outside, social, or cultural factors being ignored and thus, the contribution of outside factors to the problem is seldom addressed. Labelling and internalising, by creating expectations of behaviour, in fact leads to the occurrence of these expected behaviours (Gergen, 1990).

Mental health terms are evaluative; there is a norm that we are expected to attain and maintain, and when we fail to do so we are stigmatised by being defined as inferior in comparison to both the healthy functioning of the ideal individual and the superior, fully functioning therapist. That the concept of this psychologically healthy individual is suffused with cultural ideals of personhood is overlooked. As mental health definitions are deemed to be 'objective knowledges', and mental health professionals are seen as experts in dealing with these 'real' deficiencies, people experiencing problems are likely to turn to professionals for help. This reduces the natural interdependencies that exist within communities. Problems are isolated from the context in which they occur and definitions are used to establish the essential nature of the person. Not surprisingly, the individual is likely to see their problems as generalised and pervasive rather than circumscribed, and limited in time and space (Gergen, 1990).

Narratology

All knowing requires an act of interpretation and consequently it is not possible to have knowledge of objective reality. Bateson (1972) suggests that the understanding that we have of, or the meaning we ascribe to any event is determined and restrained by how well our interpretations fit with known patterns of events. He also argued that difference must be coded into events in time if it is to be perceptible to us. Events that cannot be patterned are not selected for survival and as such will not exist for us as facts. Narrative incorporates both a means of patterning events and a temporal dimension. According to Gergen and Gergen (1988) narratives are a linguistic tool constructed by persons and used in relationships to sustain, enhance, or impede various actions. All narratives organise events in time. They establish a point to the story or explain an event, include those events that are relevant to the valued end point, establish causal links between events, and have a beginning, middle and an end. Narratives explain, account for, and constitute experience (Adams, 1996). Narrative structures organise and give meaning to experience, but because they involve a process of selection, they leave out as much, or more, than they include (White & Epston, 1990). From these ideas narrative therapists have developed a therapy based on a story metaphor. In plotting events that have previously gone unnoticed into a story, these events are both made more memorable and given substance.

Structuring a Narrative Interview

White and Epston (1990) make the general assumption that persons experience problems when the narratives in which their lives are being storied are limiting or destructive. They believe that where this is the case, there will always be significant aspects of the person's life that contradict the dominant discourses. Thus, they perceive the goal of narrative therapy to be the identification and generation of new stories which will provide new meanings and possibilities for acting.

In this section I have drawn heavily from Roth and Epston's (1994) "Framework for a White/Epston type interview" to set out the structure of a narrative interview and define the main terms used in narrative therapy. I have incorporated into this framework, examples of each of the categories detailed below. While these examples come from the interview analysed in this research and have been included here in the interests of maintaining coherence, the main body of the analysis can be found in Chapter Four. The numbers to the left of the examples given refer to line numbers in the transcribed interview.

Compared to other therapies, there is a **predominance of questions** asked in narrative therapy; these both follow a purposeful sequence and are designed to increase the possibilities for persons to both think and act differently. One of the advantages of utilising questions is the social expectation of a response, which provides a strong invitation to the client to engage with the therapist in conversation. Questions also allow for the session to remain client-centred in that the client's perceptions, experiences, reactions, concerns, goals and plans are called forth. Additionally, clients are stimulated to reflect (Tomm, 1988) on their current situation and to conceptualise it in a way that leads to the identification and generation of new stories. This provides new meanings and possibilities for acting that will be experienced as both more helpful and more

satisfying. These alternative stories are not imposed upon the client but rather emerge in the process of exploring the problem and the person's relationship with it, in collaboration between therapist and client (White & Epston, 1990). This fosters client autonomy and minimises dependence on the therapist (Tomm, 1988). **Collaboration** with the person begins with coming up with a mutually acceptable name for the problem (O'Hanlon, 1994). This name facilitates in the conceptualisation of the problem as being external to the self.

EXTERNALISING THE PROBLEM establishes a context in which persons experience themselves as being separate from the problem-saturated stories that have dominated their perceptions of themselves, their social relationships and their lives. This alters the person's relationship to the problem by shifting the focus from a problem-person to the relationship between the person and the problem. By conceptualising the problem rather than the person or their social relationships as the problem, feelings of guilt and blame are reduced, the effects of labelling are counteracted, and an environment is created which enables persons to co-operate with each other and unite in opposition to the problem (Roth & Epston, 1994). The problem is consistently portrayed as being in opposition to the person. In the process of externalisation, the problem is objectified and at times personified, and oppressive intentions and tactics are attributed to it (O'Hanlon, 1994).

- 80 - 81 *I see, and when does the 'bad guy' rob the goodness from the 'good guy'?*
- 104 - 106 *Well, okay, do you know when you say anger, is that a good word for you? . . . What word? . . . temper?*
- 108 - 109 *If anger was like a person and you could paint a picture of him, what would anger look like?*
- 237 *The 'cactus' of anger is very tricky and cunning.*

The externalisation of the problem continues throughout the course of the therapeutic interview along with the use of preference questions and a language of agency (Roth & Epston, 1994).

A LANGUAGE OF AGENCY facilitates in the conceptualisation of the problem as inviting or influencing the person to behave in problematic ways rather than causing the problematic behaviour. This language highlights the choices that people make, thus, enabling them to take responsibility for their behaviour (Roth & Epston, 1994).

- 61 *Are you **being** a 'good guy' now?*
- 90 *Has the 'good guy' ever fought back against anger?*
- 92-94 *Is there a time when he **could** have got angry but somehow or other, the 'good guy' was too strong and **didn't allow** the anger to rob his goodness?*
- 229-230 ***How does he imagine he could** expand his Heart and strengthen his Heart should the 'cactus' irritate him?*
- 272-273 *Does he think he **could** do that but go against the 'cactus' of anger as Tomas Winter?*

PREFERENCE QUESTIONS are asked throughout the interview process to ensure that it remains client directed. These ensure that both the direction in which the therapist is going and the pace at which he or she is moving are suited to the client's needs and desires (Tomm, 1988; Roth & Epston, 1994).

- 73 *And which 'guy' do you like best?*
- 75 *This is your preference?*

- 104 - 106 *I'm interested in it. Are you? Well, okay, do you know when you say anger, is that a good word for you? . . . What word? . . . temper?*
- 218 - 219 *Does he think we should do some planning for the future, because the Cactus is still around?*
- 223 - 224 *Which of the ideas of the ones up on the board would Peter think would be good to use in the next week?*
- 287 *Do you think we should write him a letter?*
- 297 - 299 *. . . Dear Tomas . . . do you want to tell how this anger has been doing things to your life?*

Relative influence questions encourage persons to map the influence of the problem in their lives and relationships and also to map the influence they have in the life of the problem. By becoming aware of their relationship with the problem and its effects, both a sense of agency and the possibility of acting flexibly are increased (Roth & Epston, 1994).

MAPPING THE INFLUENCE OF THE PROBLEM involves identifying the behavioural, emotional, physical, interactional, and attitudinal domains impacted on by the problem. These questions provide a measure of the difficulties experienced because of the problem. A detailed exploration of the problem and its effects on the person and their relationships enable the person to become fully aware of the impact the problem is having on their life and to feel that their experiences have been heard. A broad mapping provides multiple opportunities for exploring unique outcomes later (White, 1989; Roth & Epston, 1994).

- 65 *Is it easier for you to be a 'good guy' or a 'bad guy'?*

- 80 - 81 *I see, and when does the 'bad guy' rob the goodness from the 'good guy'?*
- 117 *So anger hurts you . . .*
- 24 *Does it make you sad thinking about that?*
- 150 - 151 *Do you think your anger likes you having a good life?*
- 297 - 299 *. . . do you want to tell how this anger has been doing 'things to your life?'*
- 303 *For how long?*
- 305 - 307 *Do you want to tell him where you are now so he will know where to write this letter to?*

MAPPING THE INFLUENCE OF THE PERSON

Unique outcome questions whether historical, present, or future oriented, draw persons into noticing actions and intentions that contradict the dominant problem-saturated story. These questions facilitate the identification of times when the person's life and relationships have not been dominated or disrupted by the problem. The instances that are identified provide evidence that the person is capable of overcoming or avoiding the problem, highlighting the possibility of change (White, 1989; Roth & Epston, 1994). This provides the basis on which an alternative story is constructed.

- 90 *Has the 'good guy' ever fought back against anger?*
- 92 - 94 *Is there a time when he could have got angry but somehow or other, the 'good guy' was too strong and didn't allow the anger to rob his goodness?*
- 97 *Really! Is that the first time the 'good guy' did that?*
- 130 - 131 *Can you tell us the story of how the cactus tried to wreck your heart and it didn't?*

314 *Anger put me in . . . but I want to be a 'good guy'?*

Unique account questions encourage persons to make sense of those times they may have been unaware of when the problem was not impinging on or dominating their lives, and to integrate these into the emerging narrative. In the process of doing this, the person's resistance to oppression by the problem is highlighted (Roth & Epston, 1994). These are action focused questions (White, 1989), the intent of which is to elicit an explanation or account of how it is that on this occasion things were different from the expected.

147 - 148 *How did he grow such a big heart for a young person?*

166 - 169 *You know when the other day when you your heart won and the 'cactus' lost . . . that incident you were talking about . . . how did that happen? How do you explain that? What happened in your heart?*

Unique redescription questions invite persons to reflect on and develop meaning from the unique accounts they have given. These questions elicit from persons a redescription of themselves, others, and their relationships (Roth & Epston, 1994). The responses to these questions allow the therapist to evaluate whether the person is currently locating him or herself within the newly developed narrative rather than within the former narrative, which they had found to be unhelpful. This is also a process of consolidation. Reflecting on what the developments mean in terms of the person's competencies provides solid ground from which to move forward to considering future possibilities.

57 *Why do you think you are a 'good guy'?*

130 - 131 *Can you tell us the story of how the cactus tried to wreck your heart and it didn't?*

- 210-211 *Is he feeling a little bit proud of himself, a middle bit proud of himself, or a big bit proud of himself?*
- 290-291 *Do you think Tomas would feel proud of himself if he knew Peter was his team-mate?*
- 355 - 357 *Does he think that if he can do this, do you think that you will deserve to be on the ** Anti-Anger Team?*

Unique possibility questions encourage persons to give consideration to the new possibilities that have emerged in the process of accounting for unique outcomes and redescribing themselves and their relationships. These are 'next step' questions, the intent of which is to establish where the person might go from here and the effect this is likely to have on his or her life (Roth & Epston, 1994).

- 311 - 312 *And where do you want to go from here so he will know where you want to go?*
- 355 - 357 *Does he think that if he can do this, do you think that you will deserve to be on the ** Anti-Anger Team?*
- 359 - 360 *And do you think that you would be willing later on to coach other young people whose lives are being destroyed by anger?*

Unique circulation questions are asked with the intent of finding or creating an audience for the newly developed story (Roth & Epston, 1994). In considering both who might be interested in this alternative story and who they might like to share it with, two things occur. First, an expectation is created that the person will act as well as experience him or herself and their lives as would be expected of someone positioned within this particular narrative. Second, in the sharing of the new narrative with others, the person is making a commitment to this new story of themselves and their lives. As problems develop within a social context, the inclusion of

others that can in some way support the new story or identity that has emerged is crucial (O'Hanlon, 1994).

- 293 *Do you think we should write him a letter?*
- 298 - 299 *... do you want to tell [Tomas] how this anger has been doing things to your life?*
- 311 - 312 *And where do you want to go from here so he will know where you want to go?*
- 362 *Can I tell Tomas that?*

Experience of experience questions encourage persons to be an audience to their own story, to see themselves, in their unique accounts, through the eyes of others (Roth & Epston, 1994). In viewing themselves as others would, credibility is given to the reality of the new story. These questions not only locate persons within a social system, but they also create a valued identity for the person within this system.

- 31 - 32 *The question I asked him was, 'What do you respect most about Peter?'*
- 34 *What do you think he said? ...*
- 47 - 48 *Why do you think he might think you're a good guy?'*
- 137 - 139 *Do you think Lisa would be happy to know that you are starting to not be so thorny and to have a heart? ... not let the thorns hurt him but instead his heart got bigger?*

Questions that place unique outcomes in a historical context elicit historical evidence of the person as someone with competencies and strengths. These are a type of experience of experience question. As such,

the person is asked to search for evidence that others would have seen of their being someone that is capable of dealing effectively with the problems that have been disrupting their life (Roth & Epston, 1994). No questions of this type were asked in the interview analysed. Given that the problems Peter has experienced have been such that at 11 years old he was placed in institutional care, it may well have been difficult for him to identify anyone who would see him as capable of moving on from where he was at this point. If this were the case then a question of this type may well have proven to be counterproductive. An example of a question that would fit this category is:

Of all the people who have known you as you were growing up, who would be least surprised that you have been able to take this step? (Roth & Epston, 1994).

Consulting your consultants questions shift the status of the person from that of 'client' to 'consultant'. They move the person from the past where he or she was experiencing difficulties and was in need of help (Roth & Epston, 1994). By virtue of the person's experience in overcoming these difficulties, he or she is now positioned as being able to provide help to others. These questions function as a rite of passage easing the transition from one role to another (Epston & White, 1992).

- 355 - 357 *Does he think that if he can do this, do you think that you will deserve to be on the ** Anti-Anger Team?*
- 359 - 360 *And do you think that you would be willing later on to coach other young people whose lives are being destroyed by anger?*
- 364 - 366 *(writing) Tomas, I am hoping to join the ** National Anti-Anger Team and I will then coach other young boys and girls? Will you coach the girls too?*

It may be useful to consider the process of doing narrative therapy to be one of **scaffolding**. This term relates to the zone of proximal development, which is the range of potential each person has for learning, with that learning being shaped by the social environment in which it takes place. When the learning process is facilitated by someone with greater expertise than the individual, the learning potential of the individual is greater than that which they could achieve on their own (Wertsch, 1991). This process of facilitation is referred to as scaffolding. Each new idea that is generated builds on what came previously. In narrative therapy, the aim of scaffolding would be to generate ideas which are just within the client's grasp, maximising the potential for the development and acceptance of alternative conceptualisations of self and reality and as a consequence, change.

Narrative therapy begins by mapping the influence of the problem. The problem is defined and its impact on the person's life and relationships are explored. Externalising language, preference questions and a language of agency are used throughout the interview. From here the therapist moves to identifying and exploring those times when the problem or its effects had less impact in the life of the person. An explanation of this is sought and new meaning is constructed around what this says about the person, that they were able to relate differently to the problem on this occasion. They are then asked to consider what this might mean in terms of how they will act in the future. From here the therapist moves to grounding the new story about the person's life in a social context. Finally, the person is repositioned as an expert or someone who has successfully overcome the problems that they were experiencing. Where the initial stages of this process are not developed sufficiently before moving onto the following stages, therapy is unlikely to be successful (Epston, personal communication).

The Therapeutic Relationship

Research on the therapeutic relationship and the success of therapy has consistently shown the following (Beutler, Machado, & Allstetter Neufeldt, 1994). The effectiveness of therapy is more closely related to the identity of the therapist than to the type of psychotherapy practised. The therapeutic relationship, as perceived by the client, is crucial in gaining client participation. What is more, it is the quality of this participation that is the most important factor in determining the outcome of therapy. When an effective relationship exists between therapist and client, this alliance may be such that it has the power to transcend many cultural differences. A context, which facilitates the likelihood of a positive outcome, is one in which a therapist engages with his or her client in a way that is genuine, empathic, affirming and collaborative.

In training therapists in the narrative approach, it has been found that there is a tendency for therapists to focus on the acquisition of technical skills. This focus on technique can occur to the extent that in working with clients, questions may be asked that are totally uninformed by what the clients have previously said (Griffith & Griffith, 1992; Epston, personal communication). Where a context is not provided in which clients can both tell their stories and experience them as being understood, technical knowledge of narrative therapy will not be sufficient to bring about therapeutic change (Griffith & Griffith, 1992).

One might ask at this point “What is it that an effective narrative therapist brings to the therapeutic encounter other than knowledge of narrative techniques?” In an effort to answer this question I have drawn from the writings and communications of David Epston, Michael White, and others who train therapists in the narrative approach to therapy.

David Epston (personal communication) refers to the ethics of a narrative practice which is about doing therapy in a way that is both respectful and honouring of who a person is. He suggests that an awareness of the power relations in society, and more specifically between therapist and client is essential. A concern with how persons are positioned by the language we use is reflected in the following:

*I take Wittgenstein's aphorism "words are deeds", and ask:
What did my words do? What did my words do to you? What
did my words do to us?*

(Epston, personal communication)

Epston and White are actively opposed to both the pathologising and normalising practices that Foucault (1965; 1973; 1979; 1980) and Gergen (1990) refer to, (see section on narrative therapy and theory for details) and the idea that therapists can determine what is best for their clients. They instead act to position those they work with in ways that are enabling rather than diminishing of them. This involves of necessity a belief in both the competency and potential of their clients, as well as a strong conviction in the rights of individuals to determine for themselves how they wish to lead their lives (White & Epston, 1990).

The assumptions, which underlie the practice of narrative therapy, include the following. Change is always possible. Therapist and client are more similar to, than different from each other. Clients are ordinary people experiencing difficulties. Persons do not truly wish to harm themselves or others. The person's lived experience is greater than the narratives in which their life is storied (White & Epston, 1990; Griffith & Griffith, 1992). Alternative knowledges held by persons provide resources, which can be used to overcome problems. The therapist cannot know with certainty what

it is that the person needs to do to resolve the problem (White & Epston, 1990; Winslade, Crocket & Monk, 1997).

In terms of both the therapeutic relationship and process, the following assumptions are made. Narrative therapy requires the prior establishment of an atmosphere of curiosity, openness and respect (White & Epston, 1990; Griffith & Griffith, 1992; Drewery & Winslade, 1997). This is more likely to occur if the way in which the therapist thinks and talks about the client is conducive to a perception of the person as being someone with strengths and abilities that will enable them to overcome the difficulties that they are currently experiencing. Meaning is socially negotiated and thus, it is only through dialogue that the therapist can gain an understanding of the language a person uses (Griffith & Griffith, 1992; Drewery & Winslade, 1997; Winslade et. al., 1997). In addition to speaking and listening, therapeutic dialogue needs to provide opportunities for reflection, so that multiple perspectives can be considered (Andersen, 1987) and the possibility of new and more useful stories being told is enhanced.

Michael White (1994) suggests that the therapeutic relationship does not simply benefit the client; therapists also benefit from this relationship in that their lives are enriched through contact with clients. Being invited into the lives of others to share in both their personal difficulties and achievements privileges therapists. They experience inspiration as they see persons change their lives in spite of formidable odds. Interaction with clients provides therapists with thinking tools in the form of specific metaphors that persons use in making sense of their lives, which therapists are then able to use in other situations.

There is no neutral position in which therapists can stand. I can embrace this fact by joining with people to address all of those things that they find traumatizing and limiting of their lives . . . [Narrative therapy] is about actually joining with people in the knowing exploration of, and the performance of, options for ways of being in life that might be available to them . . . It is to engage with people in a choice making, about these options, that is based on expressions of their lived experience . . . People are explicitly consulted about these subplots of their life. If the therapist's position on these subplots is privileged - if the therapist's position is primary - then imposition will be the outcome, and collaboration will not be achieved.

(Michael White, 1996: 38-43)

Relating Theory to Accounts of a Narrative Practice

In this section I have attempted to demonstrate how the accounts given of narrative therapy are specifically related to the theoretical sources from which they draw.

Narrative therapy situates persons and the problems they present with in the social context in which they are embedded (White & Epston, 1990). It emphasises relationships between people and locates smaller systems such as the family within larger community, national, and international systems. Social issues of oppression such as poverty, abuse, discrimination and colonisation are acknowledged and attempts are made to address these (Waldegrave, 1985). This is done by inviting persons to explore the political, social, and economic causes of their problems and by encouraging them to participate in local organisations that are working to make social changes. The attempt to work in a social context decreases isolation and links persons back into their communities, fostering the natural interdependencies that are frequently destroyed in more traditional therapeutic processes. In working in a way that both minimises dependence on the therapist and facilitates client autonomy, the client's potential for resolving problems for themselves within their normal environment is increased. By reflecting on the ways in which society contributes to problems, new meanings are constructed around the problem and thus, individuals are enabled to see themselves differently (White & Epston, 1990).

Mapping the influence of the problem assists the person to identify the way the problem has become embedded in their lives and the effects that this has had on the social systems in which they live. Unique circulation questions, experience of experience questions, and historicising questions are all

socially focused questions. In the first instance, others are invited to bear witness to the new story, increasing the person's commitment to a new lifestyle and providing social support for the new identity (O'Hanlon, 1994). Experience of experience, and historicising questions ask the person to view him or herself through the eyes of another. These questions make use of "the externalised cultural gaze" that Foucault (1979) refers to. In contrast to the negative, monitoring and controlling aspects of this "externalised gaze" that are highlighted through the use of the Panopticon as a model, these particular questions enable persons to become acutely aware of positive aspects of their identity and actions. They situate the person firmly within their social system and aid in the creation of an alternative social identity, one that is socially desirable.

Narrative therapists aim to work collaboratively with their clients. In doing so, the client's perceptions, experiences, and concerns are privileged over and above those of the therapist. Recognising that perceptions of the self and reality are culturally determined, therapists work to bring the client's knowledges to the fore rather than imposing their own (White & Epston, 1990; Hoyt & Combs, 1996; Winslade et. al., 1997). This fits with the idea that therapists cannot know with certainty what will work best for their clients, and also enables therapists to work in a more culturally appropriate and gender sensitive manner. Narrative practices locate persons within a cultured society, which encompasses, amongst other things, class, ethnicity and gender (White & Epston, 1990). A feminist analysis has led to the impact of a gendered culture on both men and women being examined and, where this is limiting of the individual, challenged. The effects of this can be seen in the way that dominant knowledges surrounding, for example, anorexia (Epston, Morris, Maisel & The Anti-Anorexia/Bulimia League, 1994) and abuse (White, 1989) are exposed and alternative knowledges are

brought to the fore to replace them. The main assumptions which underlie these practices is that persons are primarily social beings and that alternative knowledges exist, which, if accessed, provide the resources for persons to both experience their life and act differently.

Deconstructionism and knowledge and power analysis support the focus on subjugated or alternative knowledges. Alternative knowledges are explored fully increasing the likelihood that persons will be able to incorporate more helpful discourses into their lives. From Foucault's analysis of knowledge and power also comes an awareness of power relations, both in society and between therapist and client. Therapists work to avoid the reproduction of these power relations in several ways. From initial interview to final meeting with clients, preference questions are an important part of the process in narrative therapy. From preferred definition of the problem to preferred outcome, these questions acknowledge the client as expert in their own lives and privilege his or her knowledge over that of the therapist (White & Epston, 1990). Furthermore, therapists are concerned with how clients are positioned by the language that is used and aim to position persons in ways, which are enabling rather than diminishing of them. This extends to the way in which persons are positioned by institutions, and thus, White and Epston (1990) and Epston & White (1992) stress the importance of documenting alternative knowledges. This documentation takes several forms. Notes are taken during the session which document the alternative story, and one copy is given to the client while the other is retained on file as a record of the session. Letters are frequently written to clients following a therapy session. In addition, certificates are given, particularly to children in recognition of their achievements. Clients are also often asked to go on record as consultants to narrative therapists, in recognition of the expert knowledges, which they hold.

Mapping the influence of the problem and identifying unique outcomes is a process of deconstruction. Gaps and inconsistencies, in the form of subjugated, alternative versions of life and personhood, are brought to light. Consideration of the particular language used, the images created by it, and what is highlighted or obscured by it, is essential in understanding the person's experience and in the reconstructing of an alternate reality (Rosenblatt, 1994). Deconstructionism, knowledge and power analysis, and more generally the plurality of social constructionism support this focus on the use of language. If our lives are constituted in language and are constantly being reconstituted in discourse, then a close examination of the language we use is not only warranted, but also necessary.

Externalisation of the problem is a response to social constructionist criticisms of mental health practices and the assumptions that underlie them. Conceptualisation of problems as being located outside of persons is reflected in the practice of externalisation. This practice serves a number of purposes. Individuals internalise the discourses that shape their lives, and these discourses are frequently unhelpful as they both represent the person as being fully responsible for problems, at the same time as defining the individual in an essentialist and thus difficult to change manner. Consequently, persons presenting with problems find themselves immobilised, trapped within these conflicting dominant stories that lead to guilt, blame, and conflict between those effected. Externalisation is a response to the harmful effects of labelling people in terms that position them as dysfunctional, by recognising that this leads to an increase rather than a decrease in problems. The altered perspective provided by externalisation allows greater potential for change in persons lives.

Extensive exploration of both the problem and alternative knowledges reflects the importance of the role of narratives in the constitution of lives. Bruner (1986) suggests that a good story is one that is indeterminate as it engages the reader in the process of creating meaning. Indeterminacy can be achieved through the creation of implicit rather than explicit meaning; the use of ambiguity; the depiction of reality from the perspective of others; and through the consideration of multiple perspectives. Narrative therapy, in encouraging the use of metaphor and imagination, in avoiding the use of determinant language, in engaging persons in the process of viewing the self from the perspective of others, and in bringing alternative perspectives to the fore, actively involves clients in the creation of narratives. In plotting previously unnoticed events into a story with a beginning, middle, and an end, in the form of past, present and future, substance is given to the emerging narrative. A consequence of this is that the newly constructed narrative is likely to be conceptualised as reflecting reality, and that it will be acted on as such.

Chapter Two

Methodology

I came to this research from a particular position. I am both a social constructionist and an advocate of narrative therapy. My aim has not been to critique narrative therapy; rather it has been to gain an understanding of what it is that happens in the practice of narrative therapy. It seemed to me that a logical way of doing this was to examine the process from both the theoretical perspectives that narrative therapists claim have informed their work, and the theoretical accounts that they have given of their work. My goal has been to account, in a reasonably comprehensive way, for anything that might contribute to the realisation of the aims of narrative therapy.

The use and effects of language are central to social constructionism. If both reality and the self are constituted in language then it seems reasonable to turn to language in our attempts to understand the therapeutic process. I chose to use deconstruction (for details, see section on narrative therapy and theory) as a method of analysing the data for several reasons. It is considered to be an appropriate method for addressing research questions which are broadly related to both the way in which language is put together and the effect that is gained by a particular construction (Burr, 1995).

Second, it fits with the theories that narrative therapy draws from. Third, as far as I am aware, there has as yet been no previous deconstruction of this therapeutic process. Finally, I thought that it would allow me to account for what was happening in the language in a reasonably comprehensive way.

The process of deconstruction is both subjective and interpretative.

Deconstruction refers to the process of taking texts apart to see how they are constructed to present particular images of people, their actions, and the world (Derrida, 1974). It reveals contradictions and hidden meanings, and

shows how we are led to accept assumptions within the text. Foucault's (1965; 1973; 1979; 1980) analysis of knowledge and power (for details, see section on narrative therapy and theory) also falls under the broad umbrella of deconstruction. In this, discourses are examined and subject positions identified to enable identity and power implications to be brought to the fore (Burr, 1995). As both these forms of deconstruction have something useful to offer in making sense of the data, I have chosen to use both forms in my analysis.

A single videotape and transcript of an interview between David Epston and a 12-year-old Scandinavian boy had been made available to me. My first step was to watch the video tape several times to get a feel for what was happening in the interview. From here I moved to reading and rereading the interview transcript. Where the transcript was incomplete I returned to the video to fill in the gaps and transcribed what had been omitted. In keeping with the initial transcript, my transcription was fairly basic. Pauses were indicated by dots but were not timed; intonation, aside from that which indicated a question or exclamation was ignored as were overlaps, because their inclusion did not appear to add to my interpretation.

As my goal was to understand what it was that David Epston was doing with language, my focus was primarily on his contribution to the interview process. While everything was translated from Scandinavian to English and back again and I could not know the exact words that were being said to Peter, I did have the interpreter's translation of Peter's words which were what David would be responding to.

Before I read the transcript I already had some idea of what I would be looking for. Doing a deconstructive reading of the text (see section on

narrative therapy and theory for details), I would be looking at the following: The ways in which David and Peter were being positioned within their discourse and the effects of this positioning; how particular images were constructed and the effect of bringing these images to the fore while backgrounding others; and finally, the specifics of how language was constructed and the function and effects of this particular construction.

I made no attempt to sort the data into categories. I consider the meaning of all language to depend in part on the immediate context in which it occurs. Furthermore, I expected that the way in which any particular utterance was received and interpreted would depend on previous exchanges. For this reason I made no attempt to cut the data into bits. Rather, I started slowly from the beginning trying to make sense of what was happening. My initial analysis was sketchy in that where I experienced some difficulty I would generally move on. When I came back to the data, I would either start again from the beginning or return to where I had encountered difficulties and try to fill in more of the gaps. As patterns emerged, I tried to make sense of these. Where there appeared to be gaps in my accounting for what was happening, I would turn to the literature on theory and practice relevant to deconstruction and narrative therapy. Where this did not provide me with answers, I would search the literature for clues. I would then move between this literature and the data until I was able to more fully account for what was happening. This was the general procedure I followed throughout the process of data analysis. Below I have provided three detailed examples of the analysis process in relation to the use and effects of positioning, metaphor and indirect suggestion.

Positioning

Has the good guy ever fought back against anger? . . . Is there a time when he could have got angry but somehow or other, the good guy was too strong and didn't allow the anger to rob his goodness?

[Lines 90-94]

A deconstructive reading of this quote from the interview involved trying to identify the following: What local or alternative knowledges were revealed through these particular questions? How was Peter positioned by these questions, that is what subject positions were foregrounded and which backgrounded? What were the implications of this positioning, that is, what actions and rights accompany these particular subject positions?

In the first sentence, an alternative knowledge that stands in contradiction to the dominant knowledge of Peter as an extremely aggressive, antisocial person is brought to the fore. If it is possible as is suggested, for Peter to fight back against anger, then there must be the possibility for him to be someone other than the aggressive, antisocial person he is deemed to be in the dominant narrative. By bringing the alternative knowledge forward, the dominant knowledge is backgrounded, making it less available to be acted on while increasing the likelihood that the alternative knowledge will be perceived as reality.

In raising the possibility that Peter could have fought back against anger an alternative subject position emerges. Peter is positioned as the 'good guy' and as being in opposition to anger. As someone positioned in this way, given that goodness is socially valued and antisocial behaviour considered to be abhorrent, he is positioned as a person entitled to social respect. Behaving antisocially is not compatible with this subject position and so resistance to anger would be expected. In the sentences that follow it is

suggested that the good guy was too strong implying that Peter is strong. More than this, it is implied that strength is what will determine whether he is able to oppose anger successfully or not. Thus, if Peter takes up the position of good guy in opposition to anger, he will be positioned as someone with strength, while if he rejects this positioning he will instead be positioned as someone who lacked the strength to successfully oppose anger. **Too strong and didn't allow anger to rob his goodness** holds a suggestion of a hero doing battle, a position that would have high social value. As such, it would be expected that Peter would want to identify with his resistance to anger and thus reinforce the idea of himself as being a hero. **Somehow or other** positions Peter as capable of opposing anger while perhaps not being entirely certain of how he was able to do so.

Metaphor

Can you tell us the story of how the cactus tried to wreck your heart and it didn't? . . . Do you think that Lisa would be happy to know that you are starting to not be so thorny and to have a heart? . . . not let the thorns hurt him but instead his heart got bigger? . . . Do you think Peter, that Lisa is in your heart? . . . Why does Peter think that he is such a big-hearted person? How did he grow such a big heart for a young person?

[Lines 130-148]

Where I encountered the use of metaphor, I would ask what things were associated with the particular metaphor used and how this enabled the conceptualisation of both the self and reality in specific ways, and consequently enabled certain actions rather than others. Where a metaphor foregrounds one thing it of necessity backgrounds others (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Burr, 1995). Hence, I would consider the consequences of conceptualising reality in this particular way.

In the above extract, the metaphors used are of cactus representing anger and heart representing good guy. Personified as cactus, anger is of necessity conceptualised as being external to Peter. Opposition is highlighted between cactus and heart. The use of **the cactus** objectifies and externalises anger while the use of **your heart** suggests that heart is a part of Peter. This metaphor suggests that heart has the power to withstand the onslaught of anger. In considering what things were associated with the concept heart I came up with the following list: heart as a container of positive attributes; warmth; kindness; goodness; gentleness; lionhearted; courage. These things stood in contrast to concepts such as unkind, hurtful, mean-spirited, and cowardly. The terms I associated with heart seemed to fit with the idea that the heart could stand against anger, and what is more, they would be incompatible with the opposing negative terms I have suggested as well as most other antisocial behaviour.

In asking **how the cactus tried to wreck your heart and didn't** a metaphor of battle is created in which cactus is depicted as attempting to cause harm and failing. Heart is at the same time positioned as successfully surviving or evading the attack. The consequence of the construction of this image is that a concrete image replaces the abstract idea of Peter opposing anger, thus facilitating the likelihood that he will perceive this particular construction of the problem as having a basis in reality. As heart survived cactus, Peter may perceive himself to be capable of resisting the problems he is facing and instead choose more productive alternative behaviours. As the metaphor of heart as capable of opposing anger is developed, Peter is invited to see himself through the eyes of a significant other who perceives him to be capable of moving away from where he is to a happier life. This metaphor positions Peter as someone in the process of change through suggestions that he can overcome the problem and through the description of him as

someone whose heart is not only growing but in fact is an unusually big heart for a young person. This suggests that he has more of what it takes to deal with serious problems than do most people. If these suggestions were made explicitly without the use of metaphor they would most likely be rejected. Metaphors create images that appear to have substance and so are less likely to be challenged. The advantage of a metaphor of opposition is that Peter can be positioned as opposing the problem rather than opposing those who want him to alter his behaviours.

While I could see that if the above were what David Epston was accomplishing, it might have considerable therapeutic value in relation to both how Peter would perceive himself and how he would choose to act, I began to doubt my interpretations. More than this, I began to wonder whether the associations I was seeing were simply a figment of my imagination. At this point, I reread other transcribed interviews that had been published. While I had read these articles much earlier in the research process, they hadn't connected particularly well for me at that time. Rereading at this later point, I was able to identify similar patterns in the way that things were being done with language. I have included a quote from a transcribed interview between David Epston and 10 year old Hayden for comparison (Barlow, Epston, Murphy, O'Flaherty & Webster, 1987).

Do you think you've got a tiger inside you that could take charge of your stomach? . . . What kind of tiger food do you think he'll need to be REALLY strong for tomorrow? . . . And do you think that three-headed tiger has enough heads to eat up those yucky feelings? . . . You're a tiger tamer.

(Barlow et al., 1987:37)

In examining this extract from an interview between David Epston and Hayden, we can see a similar pattern in the use of metaphor. **Do you think**

you have a tiger inside you that could take charge of your stomach presupposes that tigers are able to take charge of stomachs and in doing so reduce vomiting, just as telling the story of **how cactus tried to wreck your heart and didn't** presupposes that heart is something that can challenge cactus. Both questions create metaphors of opposition and both internalise that which it is suggested can be helpful, i.e., **your heart and the tiger inside you**. The possibility of success is raised in both cases, thus increasing the likelihood that it will be seen as achievable. Development of strength is portrayed in **what kind of tiger food do you think he'll need to be REALLY strong** and in **you are starting to have a heart . . . his heart got bigger . . . how did he grow such a big heart? You're a tiger tamer and how did he grow such a big heart for a young person** both create an image of the person as someone with special qualities. As such they are more likely to be successful at difficult tasks. Because similarities in the way that words were put together to create images occurred across most of the transcripts I read, I became more confident about the conclusions that I was reaching. The way that metaphor was used in the therapeutic context was consistent, suggesting that its use by the therapist was intentional rather than accidental.

Indirect Suggestion and Movement in Meaning

You know when the other day when you your heart won and the 'cactus' lost . . . How did that happen? How do you explain that? What happened in your heart?

[Lines 167-170]

When I first read the above I puzzled over what was happening. My initial reaction was "one question after another does not fit with normal counselling practice; why is DE doing this?" In an attempt to get a clearer picture of what was happening, I broke the above quote into sentences,

placing one below the other. I started to look at the meaning of individual sentences, similarities between sentences and the effect that resulted from the particular way the words and sentences were strung together. The first sentence presupposes a reality, that is **heart won and the cactus lost**. **How did that happen** suggests that something must have happened to allow this event to occur. Simply by asking this question significance is given to the event referred to. **How do you explain that** provides the stimulation to construct meaning around the event. **What happened in your heart** presupposes that the heart won because of some change in Peter's heart, implying that he is a changed person. The link between **happen** in the earlier sentence and **happened** in the last sentence reduces the likelihood that the change in Peter's heart will be questioned as the earlier sentence presupposed that something happened and this was built on as though accepted. It seemed that the use of presupposition, indirect suggestion and reframing of questions that built on earlier established meaning resulted in Peter being led to think about things in a very specific way. While presupposition and the building of meaning occurred in this way in later parts of the interview between Peter and DE with a similar effect, I began to wonder if I was seeing patterns where they didn't exist. I returned to the literature for confirmation, to the interview that I used previously for comparison, and looked for similarities in construction.

*How many times do you think you are going to vomit tomorrow?
 . . . Four? How many times do you want to vomit? . . . What
 about if you vomit twice? . . . What if you vomit twice and didn't
 get very upset? . . . When would you like to vomit?*
 (Barlow et al., 1987:35)

The first question here simply elicits the specific expectations that Hayden holds regarding how many times he thinks he will vomit. **How many times**

do you want to vomit presupposes that there is some choice in this. DE moves from here to **what if you vomit twice** to **what if you vomit twice and didn't get very upset**; this functions as an indirect suggestion by raising it as a possibility. DE then moves on to, **when would you like to vomit**, which suggests that there is some choice about the time. If David were to move directly from **how many times do you think you are going to vomit** to **when would you like to**, the suggestion that Hayden has some choice in the matter would probably have been challenged. This is not to say that sentences that fall between the beginning and the end of sections of speech have no relevance. It is rather to suggest that this process of scaffolding is one of placing words and sentences in such a way that later sentences that might be disputed if they occurred earlier are more easily accepted because of the order of presentation.

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In the following chapter, I have given some background information to provide a context for the interview. In Chapter Four, I move on to the analysis of the interview between 'Peter' and David Epston, providing a deconstruction of the practice of narrative therapy. All personal names other than that of David Epston have been changed to ensure 'Peter's' anonymity, and place names have been replaced by asterisks.

Chapter Three

Background to the Interview

Peter was twelve years of age at the time of this interview. He is a working class, Scandinavian child, whose background includes witnessing the abuse of his mother by his father. While his parents divorced when he was one year old, he had contact with his father in some threatening situations for another year. He had also heard quite a lot about his father's violence towards his mother. In addition, he was aware that his father had threatened his grandmother with a knife and had been in prison. When Peter was two years old his mother met his stepfather and consequently, Peter thinks of his stepfather as his "real father". Approximately a year before this interview, Peter's mother had given birth to twin daughters. Peter was very protective of both his mother and his sisters.

Since Peter started school at seven years of age, he had exhibited extremely oppositional and aggressive behaviour outside the home and particularly at school. The headmaster of his school described him as "continuously negativistic" and in line with this, the school nurse had found him to be "one of the most difficult pupils" she had ever met. He had attacked a classmate and tried to strangle him and also caused great concern to school staff by playing with fire. At eleven years old, he was referred to the Child Guidance Clinic for assessment and was subsequently placed in institutional care.

At the time of this interview, Peter had been resident in ** Child Guidance Clinic for a year. While he had made some progress during this time, when frightened he was inclined to act out to the extent that "he seemed more or less out of control in these situations". Six months before this interview, one of Peter's sisters had died of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome and his acting

out had increased. The day before this interview took place he had been informed that a decision had been made about his future. Peter wanted to return to his ordinary school, but it was considered too early. Thus, it was suggested that he continue treatment at the clinic on a day-patient basis. The staff at this clinic were greatly concerned that if Peter did not change, his future would be likely to be one of crime and violence.

David Epston was visiting the clinic to give some workshops and Peter's therapist asked if he would be prepared to see Peter. A good reception from Peter was not anticipated as he generally hit out at anyone who attempted to talk to him about his problems.

~ ~ ~

While this interview is reasonably representative of both 'narrative talk' and the structuring of a narrative interview, it is an atypical interview for the following reasons:

- Being a one-off, this interview is very compressed. Consequently, many of the steps that would normally have occurred were missed out.
- As English was Peter's second language, a translator was required.
- While the interview went for approximately one hour, because of the time taken in translating, in effect it was probably more like a 30 or 40-minute interview.
- This situation was considered to be extremely serious.

Chapter Four

Analysis: Narrative Interview

The interview transcript used in this analysis is the copyright property of David Epston.

Please note that Peter's therapist is acting as interpreter in this interview and speaks for himself as well as interpreting for Peter. Thus, I have used "Dr" rather than "Int" to indicate his speech.

- 1 DE: *How are you? Do you speak English?*
- 2 P: *Yeah.*
- 3 DE: *Oh you do. You don't have to. We have a translator for you.*
4 *Sit down. What have you got there in your bag?*
- 5 P: *Game boy.*
- 6 DE: *Oh gameboy, right. (to interpreter) Um, do you want to tell*
7 *Peter about me or does he know about me?*
- 8 Dr: *I think that he knows about you. I've asked him if it was more*
9 *that he wanted to know about you than I told him but he, it's*
10 *okay.*
- 11 DE: *(to Peter) And do you want to speak English with me or*
12 *would you prefer that we speak * * ?*

Building rapport, engaging with client. Peter is given a choice; this increases the likelihood of gaining his co-operation.

- 13 Dr: *(interpreting for Peter) He says that he probably understand*
14 *quite a lot of what you are telling him but it's better that I*
15 *translate all the time.*
- 16 DE: *Okay. Fair enough.*
- 17 Dr: *Yes, he understands. I think that will be very nice because that*
18 *means that he will hear it on two languages.*
- 19 DE: *Okay, okay, okay. Just in case you know while we are talking,*
20 *you'd like to know something about me, that's fine, you just ask*
21 *me, because I know its hard to do it when you don't know me*

22 *but if you might, as I get talking, I might say something that's*
 23 *funny, maybe New Zealandish and then we'll explain it to you.*

Here, David suggests that any discomfort that Peter may feel with the interview process would be normal and expected in this situation, and what is more, that he David, is likely to be responsible for any misunderstandings that may arise.

24 *Well, I have been talking to Dr Erikson and he's told me some*
 25 *things about you and I've written them down (showing him*
 26 *comments written down in a note-pad). I'll tell you what they*
 27 *all are, I'll tell you what they all are but*

This offer reduces the power difference between therapist and client as well as suggesting openness and a willingness to work co-operatively.

28 *DE: But um I just wonder what your answer, what you think he*
 29 *would have answered to this question:*

30 *Dr: Which I have answered.*

31 *DE: The question I asked him was, "What do you respect most*
 32 *about Peter?"*

This question opens up room for alternative knowledges. Implying that Peter is someone worthy of respect contrasts dramatically with societal assessment, which has resulted in him being resident in a child guidance clinic. By getting Peter to search for solutions rather than simply relaying the response, the potential is provided for both multiple answers as well as a response that sits well with him. It also avoids privileging another's knowledge over his. This is basically a search for resources within Peter. This question also situates Peter within a social system as he is asked to view himself from the perspective of another.

33 P: Oi . . . oi . . . oi . . .

34 DE: What do you think he said? . . . Hard question! Hard
35 question! Take your time!

Defining this as a difficult question reduces the possibility of Peter seeing himself as incompetent if he in fact experiences difficulty in finding an answer. **Take your time** suggests that a question such as this would normally require some thought.

36 Dr: (interpreting for Peter) That you are talking much. He thinks
37 that I enjoy that he talks a lot with me. He talks more with me
38 than some other boys . . . Some other people. He can imagine
39 that I enjoy that he talks to me.

40 DE: Mmmmh . . . No! I'm not saying that he doesn't, that wasn't what
41 he said number one! That wasn't what he said number one.
42 take another guess! (long pause) Is this hard?

No, delayed by **mmmh** gives the impression that this was given consideration by DE as a possible response to the question he asked. As Peter's answer was not what Dr Erikson gave and it is not denied that he may have thought this, then it is established that there must be at least two things about Peter that might warrant respect. The difficulty of the question is again emphasised allowing for Peter to avoid defining himself as either incompetent or a failure as many people might be expected to give the wrong answer if the question was very difficult.

43 P: Yes . . .

44 DE: Take your time. (long pause) Just take a guess! You don't
45 have to be right or wrong.

Suggesting that Peter **just take a guess** reduces pressure on him to provide the correct answer as does **you don't have to be right or wrong**. Guessing

wrong says little about a person's ability and it is implied that no meaning will be assigned to whether the answer is correct or not. Peter will not be defined by the response that he gives.

46 Dr: *(interpreting for Peter) He's a good guy!*

47 DE: *Why do you think he might think you're a 'good guy'? What's*
48 *good about you?*

Neither affirming nor denying that Dr Erikson thinks that Peter is a good guy has a similar effect to acknowledging that this is what he has said. If this answer was incorrect and attention was given to this, it may have undermined Peter's confidence in himself and therefore his ability to move his life in a positive direction. This question extends the possibility of alternative personhood as viewed by both self and other; he is both worthy of respect and a good guy. Searching for why Dr Erikson might think he is a good guy and what he considers to be good about himself provides detail and consequently substance to the alternative view.

49 Dr: *(interpreting) He thinks because I care about him that . . . I told*
50 *you that I was running after him the other day and that was for,*
51 *as I understand him, the meaning of that was I am caring about*
52 *him so I have to think he is a 'good guy'.*

53 DE: *Otherwise you wouldn't have?*

Phrased in this way, Dr Erikson is led to respond in a way that supports the idea that he both cares for Peter and thinks that he is a good guy.

54 Dr: *No I wouldn't have cared about him.*

55 DE: *And you think you are a 'good guy'?*

If both Dr Erikson and Peter think that Peter is a good guy, this would lend credibility to the idea that he is in reality a good guy. If Peter is a good guy, then quite different actions might be expected of him by both himself and others than if he were not.

56 P: *Yeah.*

57 DE: *Why do you think you are a 'good guy'?*

Peter is being asked to provide a reason for considering himself to be a good guy. Reasons for why he might think he is a good guy that come from him will be viewed quite differently than those that come from others which may feel like impositions. Stating what is good about himself seems likely to result in him both believing the statements made and these beliefs consequently becoming self-fulfilling prophecies. A case is being built here for Peter being someone that might be worthy of social respect in contrast to the dominant story. This question comes after establishing that someone else thinks he is a good guy, thus it builds on what has previously been accepted and therefore is unlikely to be disputed.

58 Dr: *(interpreting) If he wants to be a 'good guy' he can manage it. If*
59 *he doesn't want to be a good guy, he won't be it.*

60 DE: *Oh . . . oh. What are you doing now? Is this 'good guy' behaviour?*
61 *(pointing)? Are you being a 'good guy' now?*

Here, David is clarifying the definition of behaviour, also noticing current good guy behaviour. There has been a move here from **good guy** to **good guy behaviour**. This shift emphasises through the use of both **good guy behaviour** and **are you being** that a good guy or later as we will see a bad guy is something that Peter can choose to be rather than simply who he is. **Doing, being** and **now** situate behaviour in time suggesting that it is

changeable. Behaviour is seen to be something that can be altered far more easily than what are perceived to be internal characteristics or the essential essence of a person.

62 P: *Yah . .*

63 DE: *And how long do you think you will continue to be a 'good guy'?*

Mapping the influence of the problem in Peter's life and relationships begins here. Development of mutual understanding of the problem. Bringing in the length of time that Peter can continue 'good guy' behaviour helps to define the problem as time limited rather than always present, opening up the possibility of alternative preferred behaviour occurring.

64 Dr: *(interpreting) Until he got irritated . . and really irritated.*

65 DE: *I see. Is it easier for you to be a 'good guy' or a 'bad guy'?*
66 *Pretty good English.*

Determining level of current difficulty by asking which is easier allows for change to be recognised more easily, if and/or when it occurs. DE first introduces 'bad guy' here in clear opposition to 'good guy'. This opposition allows for greater ease in creating an alternate story which stands in contradiction to dominant story. Note that the above shift from 'good' or 'bad guy' to 'good' or 'bad guy' behaviour highlighted through the use of **for you to be** reduces the likelihood of Peter internalising rather than externalising his problematic behaviour. Commenting on his English emphasises that he is seen as a competent individual and thus encourages his co-operation.

67 Dr: *(interpreting) He thinks it is around the same but it's very easy*
68 *for him to get irritated if something isn't the way he thought he*

69 *should be. If he can't quite catch it.*

70 *DE: So it's 50% 'good guy' - 50% 'bad guy'. (Drawing both headings*
 71 *on the right and left of a white board)*

Use of a white-board means that Peter will have some record of what has taken place in terms of both old and new stories that he can take away with him. Providing a measure in '50% good guy -50% bad guy' allows for change to be more easily noticed and consequently used as evidence that change is possible. Placing 'good guy' and 'bad guy' on opposite sides of the board separates them and allows them to be viewed as in opposition to each other more easily.

72 *P: Yes.*

73 *DE: And which 'guy' do you like best?*

Establishing Peter's preference. This both serves to demonstrate that his views count and that it will be him rather than some authority that will decide what is best for him; it also ensures that DE is moving in a direction that Peter is comfortable with and will consequently be likely to actively pursue. This is the beginning of externalisation of the problem. **Guy** is out there rather than being framed as part of Peter.

74 *P: Left . . . the 'good guy'.*

75 *DE: This is your preference?*

Emphasises that this is Peter's choice. Where he is seen to be active in making decisions rather than having decisions made for him there is no reason why he would choose to oppose therapeutic process.

76 P: *Yah.*

77 DE: *What do you like about your 'good guy'?*

Continuation of mapping elicits an answer to why Peter might want to be a 'good guy'. **Your good guy** implies belonging of goodness to Peter. Thus, the 'good guy' is being internalised. The answer that is elicited also provides evidence of the disadvantages of being a 'bad guy'. Peter's response reveals that he is unable to be supported and comforted when he is angry.

78 Dr: *(interpreting) It's a very good one to have. If he is the 'good*
79 *guy', he can have support and be comforted even if he is angry.*

80 DE: *I see, and when does the 'bad guy' rob the goodness from the*
81 *'good guy'?*

The bad guy is used here rather than **your bad guy**, externalising and consequently distancing Peter from 'bad guy' identity. This contrasts with the use of **your good guy** in line 77. 'Bad guy' and 'good guy' are placed in opposition to one another here with 'bad guy' stealing from 'good guy'. **When** presupposes that bad guy does in fact rob good guy and so this idea is not questioned.

82 Dr: *(interpreting) When he got angry.*

83 DE: *So is goodness robbed by anger?*

This question draws attention to a violation occurring and emphasises that Peter has lost something from this. A no in response to this question is unlikely given that the response to **when** supported the suggestion that goodness is robbed by anger.

84 P: *Yes . . .*

85 DE: *Is that fair?*

Here, a case is being built against 'bad guy'. As the case against 'bad guy' is getting stronger while externalisation is still minimal, this is an important point at which to separate Peter from 'bad guy' identity.

86 P: *No.*

87 DE: *So anger, anger robs 'good guy'? (Writing on white-board) Its*
88 *not fair?*

By replacing **bad guy** term with **anger** the problem is placed at a greater distance from Peter, increasing externalisation of the problem. This also leaves 'good guy' remaining. The use of the term **fair** implies that injustice is occurring.

89 Dr: *(interpreting) No, he doesn't think its fair.*

90 DE: *Has the 'good guy' ever fought back against anger?*

Unique outcome question. This is the beginning of mapping the influence of the person in the life of the problem. This question raises the possibility of **good guy fighting back against anger** and thus functions as an indirect suggestion. Phrased in this way, it also emphasises opposition between **good guy** and **anger**. Given the suggestion that 'good guy' may have fought back against anger, clearly Peter is being positioned as 'good guy'. He is being invited to notice actions and intentions that may contradict the dominant problem-saturated story. Use of the term **ever** allows for the minimum of opposition to anger to become noticed.

91 Dr: *(interpreting) No . . . he can't remember that.*

- 92 *DE: Is there a time when he could have got angry but somehow or*
 93 *other, the 'good guy' was too strong and didn't allow the anger*
 94 *to rob his goodness?*

This question is phrased in this particular way in response to Peter's saying that "no, he can't remember that". The use of **somehow or other** minimises and mystifies the words that follow allowing for minimal resistance to be noticed, and then later to be built upon as the previously unspecified and unexplained are both specified and explained. As the 'good guy', Peter is being positioned as a possible hero, strong in his stand against anger, refusing to allow theft to occur. Given that he is being positioned as a hero here, it would be expected that he would want to identify resistance to the **anger that robs his goodness** as to do otherwise would be to refute the possibility of him being a hero.

- 95 *Dr: (interpreting) When I was running after him, it was the 'good*
 96 *guy' who got him to stop and come back to me.*

- 97 *DE: Really! Is that the first time the 'good guy' did that?*

Really brings to Peter's attention the importance of what has happened, that he has acted in opposition to anger and won. The use of **first time** acts as an indirect suggestion as it suggests the potential for this occurring again.

- 98 *Dr: (interpreting) He said he can't remember?*

- 99 *DE: Can you remember this recent time?*

Eliciting a yes from Peter gains his co-operation, decreasing the possibility of him opposing discussion of this recent event.

- 100 *P: Yes.*

101 *DE: Would you like to talk about it? I'd like to talk about it. Would*
 102 *you like to talk about it?*

Again, emphasising the significance of the event. The focus moves here from what Peter would like to David and returns to Peter again emphasising the importance of what he would like. Asking whether Peter would like to talk about it rather than saying 'let's talk about it' provides the opportunity for him to refuse to discuss the event. Gaining consent is likely to increase his active participation in the process taking place, as he has agreed to it. That DE (with his position and standing in the community) is stating an interest in the incident is likely to arouse curiosity, as well as stress the significance of an event that previously went unnoticed.

103 *P: Yes.*

104 *DE: I'm interested in it. Are you? Well, okay, do you know when you*
 105 *say anger, is that a good word for you? . . . What word? . . .*
 106 *Temper?*

Preference questions emphasise that it is Peter who is in charge or at the least an equal partner in the process. Preference questions reduce the possibility of the client seeing himself in opposition to the therapist rather than joined with the therapist in opposition to the problem. Having a label for the problem facilitates the process of externalisation.

107 *Dr: What kind of word would you like, I asked him.*

108 *DE: If anger was like a person and you could paint a picture of him,*
 109 *what would anger look like? How would it look?*

Portraying the problem visually helps in the process of personification. Once a problem has been personified or is seen to have substance it is then very difficult for it to be conceptualised as an intrinsic part of the person.

This removes the possibility of the person trying to act in opposition to what they view as a part of themselves.

- 110 P: *(Draws a picture of thorns on the white-board)*
 111 Dr: *(interpreting) It's just like thorns.*
 112 DE: *(Acting out thorns pricking his skin) Hurt? Irritate? Cactus!*
 113 *Like a cactus?*

Visual depiction gives the impression that the pain that Peter experiences comes from an external source. The thorns are portrayed as actively hurting him. The use of **irritate**, previously used by Peter in line 64, reduces the likelihood that DE's interpretation will be questioned.

- 114 P: *Yes.*
 115 DE: *CACTUS! Can we call it 'cactus'? Would that be better?*

Getting approval for a label that allows for the vivid visualisation of the personified problem. **CACTUS** is a metaphor for Peter's anger; this metaphor gives concreteness to an abstract concept and facilitates externalisation of the problem.

- 116 P: *Yes.*
 117 DE: *So anger hurts you, (pricking skin with imaginary thorns) . . .*
 118 *When you are a 'good guy', what would be the picture of the*
 119 *'good guy'? What kind of plant? (Peter draws a picture of a*
 120 *heart on the white-board) Oh great! So the 'good guy' has got a*
 121 *big heart, that's nice. Do you think that the 'cactus' is irritating*
 122 *your heart?*

Emphasis of anger as having agency, being both external to Peter and causing him pain. Visual portrayal of being hurt by anger again gives it more substance. Former use of the concept of **cactus irritating** is built on

here and added to **heart** which is first introduced here by Peter and taken up by DE. It can be clearly recognised as internal, either physically or symbolically. DE refers to **your heart** emphasising belonging, in contrast to 'cactus' which is positioned as external to Peter.

123 P: *Yes (starts to cry).*

124 DE: *Does it make you sad thinking about that?*

Elicits acknowledgement that pain and sadness are caused by anger.

P: *(Nods assent).*

125 DE: *It's not a good thing! Not a good thing! Well that makes me glad*
126 *to hear about a few days ago . . . was that a few days ago . . . ?*

Here, DE both acknowledges Peter's feelings and defines his experience of the effects of anger as "not good". DE positions himself as allied with Peter against anger and emphasises that the events referred to were of significance.

127 Dr: *Yes . . . the same day you came. Tuesday.*

128 DE: *So it is fresh in your mind?*

Asking a question that elicits a yes response both increases the likelihood of co-operation and that DE and Peter will be seen as being in agreement.

129 P: *Yah.*

130 DE: *Okay. Can you tell us the story of how the cactus tried to*
131 *wreck your heart and it didn't?*

Peter is positioned as surviving 'cactus', while anger is portrayed as attempting harm and failing. A unique outcome question, this encourages the exploration of personal resources, strengths and an alternative view of self and life story. The term **wreck** links back to the metaphor of **bad guy**.

132 Dr: *(interpreting) He thinks about the moment when the little sister*
 133 *died. That was the answer on that question. Maybe you thought*
 134 *about something else? When you ask him could you see the story*
 135 *when the cactus wrecked the heart. That was when Lisa . . . the*
 136 *small girl was dead.*

137 DE: *Do you think Lisa would be happy to know that you are starting*
 138 *to not be so thorny and to have a heart? . . . not let the thorns hurt*
 139 *him but instead his heart got bigger?*

Peter is invited to view himself through the eyes of a significant person who both cares about him and sees him as someone capable of rejecting anger and moving on to a happier life. He is also invited to see this as making her happy. Peter is positioned as someone in the process of changing, rather than being trapped in certain behaviour patterns. A visual image of his heart getting bigger is created to replace that of him having thorns. A metamorphosis is currently taking place. Verbalising **starting to . . . have a heart** foregrounds this, as it backgrounds the assumption that previously he was a person without a heart. This sentence starts out suggesting that Peter previously did not have a heart but now is someone whose heart is growing.

140 Dr: *I reframed it and said: 'What do you think if the heart would win*
 141 *instead of the cactus, would she like that? and he said she would*
 142 *like that 'heart' would win.*

143 DE: *Do you think, Peter, that Lisa is in your heart?*

Lisa is both internalised and identified as a possible source of support and/or strength to Peter, as someone who is on his side. Here heart is seen as something that can contain other things. Not just anything is contained in our heart, only those things which we consider to be special or important to us are conceptualised as being 'in our hearts'. This emphasises Lisa's importance to Peter. Those things, which are seen as being either close to or in our hearts, are thought to give us comfort and strength. They are incorporated into our identity becoming a part of us.

144 P: *Yah (crying).*

145 DE: *Do you want to put her name in there? (pointing to his 'heart'*
 146 *drawn on the white-board). Thank you. Why does Peter think he*
 147 *is such a big-hearted person? How did he grow such a big heart*
 148 *for a young person?*

By putting Lisa's name in the picture Peter has drawn of a heart which is consistently referred to as his heart, symbolic internalisation is taking place. Heart as a metaphor is both seen as a container, as well as the location of 'personal characteristics' such as goodness, kindness and courage. Someone with a big heart might be considered to have more of these positive 'characteristics' than others might. Visual imagery is again used to give concreteness to an abstract concept. DE refers to Peter as a person rather than using the possible alternatives of adolescent, child, or teenager. As person incorporates the category of adult as well as the above, its use suggests similarity between himself and David, thus downplaying the age imbalance. The use of **such** a big-hearted person and a big heart **for a young person** positions Peter as a person whose heart is bigger than average. In this context a heart is seen as something that can grow bigger, therefore although one may have been seen as 'heartless' at some point, heart can be developed. Phrasing the question in this way ensures that there is no querying of whether or not he does in fact have a big heart but rather

the question becomes why he has a big heart. As 'big heart' is often used to denote kindness or goodness and even courage in opposition to unkind, hurtful, or mean-spirited, it would be difficult for Peter to see himself as both hurtful and bad at the same time as seeing himself as kind and good. Consequently these phrases open up space for an alternative story. This alternative story about who Peter is, is foregrounded at the same time as the dominant story is backgrounded. Reflecting on how this may have come about fleshes out the alternative story.

149 Dr: *(interpreting) I like life.*

150 DE: *I like life . . . mmh. Do you think your anger likes you having*
151 *a good life?*

Here anger is portrayed as an enemy of a good life, as something that can take away all the things that Peter enjoys. Again, anger is seen as having agency and consequently, as being external to Peter.

152 Dr: *(interpreting) No (chagrined).*

153 DE: *If the memory of Lisa was kept close to his heart, would that*
154 *defend him against the 'cactus' of anger?*

Gauging how much of a resource the memory of Lisa is able to provide. In or close to heart is clearly seen as positive. Reference to **defend** links back to the metaphor of the **good guy** who is seen as being in opposition to the **cactus of anger**, which being depicted as concrete, must be external to Peter. Agency is extended to memory here. If Lisa is present in Peter's heart she would presumably want him to get the better of anger and consequently, if he is unable to manage it he may be seen to be letting her down.

155 Dr: *I think that was a difficult question. Did I get it right? I*
156 *asked: 'If Lisa was close to his heart',*

157 DE: *By memory.*

Memory is seen as something that can keep things close to or in one's heart.

158 Dr: *By memory . . . would that help him defend towards 'cactus'?*
 159 *(interpreting) Sadly no, because 'cactus' would be too*
 160 *strong.*

161 DE: *For even for the memory of Lisa?*

Use of **even** the memory of Lisa stresses the magnitude of this.

162 Dr: *(interpreting) Yes.*

163 DE: *Would it help in some way?*

The use of **in some way** allows for the smallest gain to be noticed and consequently results in acknowledgement that Lisa's memory can support Peter in opposing anger.

164 P: *Yes.*

165 DE: *So it would be strengthening your heart?*

The memory of Lisa **helping in some way** has been reframed here as **strengthening Peter's heart**. The implication is that this will make a difference to what Peter is able to do or accomplish. Linking to heart metaphor, a strong heart might be thought to give him the courage to oppose anger. Courage and kindness are incompatible with 'bad guy' metaphor and as such background 'bad guy' characteristics making it difficult for Peter to exhibit 'bad guy' behaviour while retaining an image of himself as someone with a big heart.

166 Dr: *(interpreting) Yes.*

167 DE: *Okay. You know when the other day when you your heart won*
 168 *and the 'cactus' lost . . . that incident you were talking*
 169 *about . . . how did that happen? How do you explain that?*
 170 *What happened in your heart?*

This highlights not just the significance of Peter overcoming 'anger' but also opposition between 'heart' and 'cactus' with 'heart' representing 'good guy' and 'cactus' representing 'bad guy'. It invites the exploration of Peter's strengths in terms of his ability to effectively manage anger. **How did that happen** is reframed as **how do you explain that** and is extended to **what happened in your heart** by repeating the word **happened** from the previous question. Repeating words, terms, or phrases used previously reduces the likelihood that what is currently being stated will be questioned.

171 Dr: *(interpreting) He felt sorrow if he had destroyed the*
 172 *possibility of talking together with me.*

173 DE: *So good friendships strengthen the heart?*

DE's question following on from Peter's concern at the thought that he had damaged an important relationship positions Peter as both knowing what would most benefit him and actively choosing a course of action that provides him with companionship as well as support, consequently enabling him to act in his own best interests against anger. **Lisa strengthening heart** is generalised here to **good friendships strengthen heart**. This builds on both the previous suggestion that **Lisa's helping in some way strengthens Peters heart** and that something **happened in his heart**. Dr Erikson is positioned as a good friend to Peter who helps to give him the strength to act as 'good guy'. This positioning increases the likelihood that they will be able to work effectively together after the conclusion of this interview, and simultaneously reduces the possibility of them acting in opposition to one

another. The use of friendships in plural form suggests the possibility of more than one friendship that could provide this support and strength, in the future if not at present.

174 Dr: *(interpreting) Yes.*

175 DE: *So loneliness strengthens 'cactus'?*

DE has reframed Peter's thinking **that he might lose the opportunity of talking with Dr Erikson as loneliness**. In contrast to friendship strengthening Peter's ability to oppose anger and win and thus increasing the possibility of further or more satisfying relationships, loneliness is depicted as increasing the likelihood of anger damaging what relationships he currently has and leaving him more susceptible to anger. What is suggested here is that there are two possible courses of action that can be engaged in, both of which are escalating cycles of behaviour, one leading to more pain, sadness, loneliness and anger, the other leading to support, comfort, and companionship. Given that these courses of action are not compatible with each other and that the depiction of an escalating cycle suggests that the further down the path Peter goes the harder it will be to extricate himself, a clear choice is being offered here. Recognition of the destructive cycles that people can become engaged in is thought to be a first step in breaking the negative cycle of behaviour and consequently the negative responses that accompany the behaviours allowing for the possibility of engaging instead in behaviour that is more productive (Tomm, 1992). **Good friendships strengthening heart and loneliness strengthening cactus** are portrayed in visual imagery terms. Thus, they are perceived as realities without the need to state explicitly that Peter has been engaging in behaviour that elicits negative responses from others, and consequently maintains a destructive cycle.

176 Dr: *(interpreting) Yes.*

177 DE: *(Drawing on the white-board). Good friendships and*
 178 *loneliness? (The former placed under the 'good guy' column*
 179 *and the latter placed under the 'bad guy' column). So there*
 180 *is a big heart, a 'good guy', the memory of Lisa, good*
 181 *friendships make for goodness?*

The relationship between loneliness and good friendships is stressed by writing on the white-board. By placing heart, Lisa, and friendships on one half of the board with anger and loneliness on the other side of the board one gets the effect of a balance sheet, clearly indicating to Peter what is to be lost or gained by the choices he makes. Having moved from a positive depiction of 'heart' being strengthened by friendships to a negative depiction of 'cactus' being strengthened by loneliness, DE, moves back to the positive and focuses on this so that it is the positive possibilities that remain highlighted.

182 P: *Yes.*

183 DE: *Can you think of anything else that is on the side of a good*
 184 *life?*

Here, a big heart, a good guy, the memory of Lisa, and good friendships are defined as being on the side of a good life. Use of **on the side of a good life** continues the metaphor of opposition or battle. It should be noted that in competition where there is a winner there must also be a loser. Thus, Peter must choose whether to win or to lose. He is asked to search for and identify anything that might enable him to get the life he chooses.

185 Dr: *(interpreting) Something else that helps heart? The 'good*
 186 *guy'? The other small girl, Maria.*

187 DE: *Do you want to write her name up there?*

A clear picture is being built up here of opposing sides with **heart** or the **good guy** being visually depicted as bigger than **cactus** in terms of the space they take up on the white-board, creating the idea that 'heart' is stronger than 'cactus'. Symbolic internalisation of Peter's other sister occurs when her name is written inside 'heart'.

- 188 P: *(Inscribes name alongside Lisa inside his 'heart')*
- 189 DE: *Cactus and thorns can't hurt thick skin.*
- 190 P: *No.*
- 191 DE: *Is his skin getting thicker, somehow or other?*
- 192 Dr: *(interpreting) Yes . . .*
- 193 DE: *Why?*
- 194 Dr: *(interpreting) When he came here from the very beginning a*
 195 *year ago, it was easier for him to get irritated. That means*
 196 *that his skin is not that thick compared to a year ago when he*
 197 *came here for the first time.*
- 198 DE: *Is it getting stronger?*
- 199 Dr: *(interpreting) No . . . it's not that strong, it doesn't have to be*
 200 *that thick any longer.*
- 201 DE: *I see . . . I see. When his skin had to be thick, did that mean he*
 202 *lost some of his good-heartedness?*

The use of the past tense suggests that Peter has already changed to some extent and that his enacted anger can be viewed as historical rather than current behaviour. There is also a reminder in the **loss of good-heartedness** of the consequence of his enacted anger. That this reminder occurs in question form means that Peter is led to acknowledge loss rather than having the suggestion imposed upon him; he is led to interpret for himself the consequences of his actions. There appears to have been a problem here

with miscommunication, with no common understanding of the metaphor **thick skin** in relation to Peter changing. After several attempts at bridging the communication gap, DE has chosen not to pursue the issue any further but instead alters direction. This fits well with the principal of working with the client's understandings and preferences.

203 Dr: *(interpreting) Yes.*

204 DE: *And if we hadn't talked about this today, would he have*
205 *known all about this? . . . Or is he just discovering it now?*

David begins the process of consolidation here. These questions presuppose that something both significant and advantageous to Peter has occurred through his participation in the interview process. **This** could refer to any of the following things, making the use of the unspecified **this** of particular value: (1) that Dr Erikson respects Peter; (2) that he both enjoys talking with Peter and (3) thinks he is a good guy; (4) that he Peter has an unusually big heart with all that this implies; (5) that anger has hurt him but that in spite of this (6) he has fought anger and won; (7) that being a good guy brings comfort and friendship; (8) his sisters are in his heart; and that (9) good friendships strengthen his heart; while (10) loneliness strengthens cactus. Finally, (11) his skin does not need to be as thick, thus he is in the process of changing. Given the number of things identifiable as possible discoveries and their contrast with the delinquent narrative in which Peter was previously positioned, it would be expected that he would enthusiastically embrace this alternative narrative in which he is consistently positioned as worthy of respect. DE elicits confirmation from Peter that he has discovered something worthwhile.

206 Dr: *(interpreting) (With enthusiasm) Yes we are discovering*
207 *things now.*

208 DE: *Great. Is that exciting?*

Again, highlighting the significance of participation and the discovery of an alternative story, one that is likely to be far more empowering to Peter than the dominant story that he was positioned in. The concept of **discovery** is built on and reframed as a cause for **excitement**. This is unlikely to be challenged given the association in meaning between discovery and excitement.

209 P: *Yes.*

210 DE: *Are you feeling any better, in any way?*

Another reframing occurs here moving from the **excitement of discovery** to **feeling better** which presupposes that he was previously not feeling so great. Given that **discoveries** could only have meaning in relation to what existed before this, then this is not a huge jump in meaning. By asking if Peter is **feeling better** it is implied that he has participated in a process that is helpful to him. **In any way** allows for minimal improvement in how he is feeling to be noticed.

211 P: *Yes.*

212 DE: *Is he feeling a little bit proud of himself, a middle bit proud*
 213 *of himself, or a big bit proud of himself? (indicated extent of*
 214 *pride by widening the gap between his two hands).*

Here **feeling better** is redefined as **feeling proud**. By asking that Peter provide a measure of the pride he is feeling, he is being positioned as someone that has accomplished something worth being proud of. The way this is phrased leaves little room for the denial of pride, rather it is the degree of pride felt that is debatable. The greater the measure of pride the

more Peter is positioned in the narrative as achieving something worthwhile. This measure also provides some degree of concreteness to the abstract concept of pride

P: (takes marker and goes to the board and draws a vertical line the length of the white board).

215 *Dr: (interpreting) Yes, he is very proud of himself.*

216 *DE: That's about two metres . . . two metres of pride. If we hadn't*
 217 *talked today, would he have missed out on feeling proud of*
 218 *himself?*

Highlighting that Peter has gained by participation in interview process. Again, eliciting acknowledgement rather than imposing it.

219 *Dr: (interpreting) Yes.*

220 *DE: Does he think we should do some planning for the future,*
 221 *because the Cactus is still around?*

Having spent some time focusing on Peter as accomplishing something and benefiting from this, the focus is moved to the future. Positioned as someone who has successfully opposed anger and won in the past; who recognises what he has to lose if he allows anger to win; who has a number of people and resources on his side; and is currently engaged in the process of taking his life back, Peter is likely to feel confident about his ability to deal effectively with anger and take an active part in planning how to control anger rather than allowing anger to control him. Again, he is asked to make a decision regarding his actions rather than having a decision imposed upon him. The mention of **Cactus still being around** functions as a reminder not to become too complacent in the face of the discoveries that have been made.

222 P: Yes.

223 DE: Yes, he would like to do some planning?

Verifying the acceptability of planning ensures that DE is not moving too far ahead of Peter.

224 Dr: (interpreting) Yes, he would like to do some planning.

225 DE: Which of the ideas of the ones up on the board would Peter
226 think would be good to use in the next week?

Preference question. Peter asked to choose.

227 P: Heart!

228 Dr: (interpreting) Heart!

229 DE: Heart! How does he imagine he could expand his Heart and
230 strengthen his heart should the 'cactus' irritate him?

Peter's input is sought here; he is being treated as an expert on his own life. **Expand his heart** creates a visual image and strengthens the effect of the metaphor. **The cactus**, which has been effectively externalised contrasts here with the more personalised and less abstract **irritate him** that serves to emphasise the concreteness of the problem.

231 Dr: (interpreting) Yes.

232 DE: How does he think . . .

233 Dr: Maybe I put the question wrong. 'If the heart tried to make a,
234 stand would the 'cactus' try to irritate him?

235 DE: If all his sisters, living and dead, were inside his heart
236 pushing outwards, would that help in any way to stop the
237 cactus of anger irritating him and becoming a 'bad guy'?

Gauging the degree of help previously identified sources of support might be. **In any way** increases the likelihood of eliciting a yes response to this question and consequently of Peter seeing himself as being capable of making a stand against anger.

238 Dr: *(interpreting) Yes, I think so . . . but it wouldn't be easy.*

239 DE: *Oh no. The 'cactus' of anger is very tricky and cunning.*

By labelling the **cactus of anger** as **tricky and cunning**, DE is acknowledging that overcoming it is difficult and in doing so is setting the stage for Peter to not see himself as a failure if he has difficulty controlling his anger. The use of the terms 'cunning' and 'tricky' also suggest that where there is difficulty, perhaps Peter needs also to develop tricky and cunning strategies. The affirmative response to the previous proposition of Peter being strengthened by having his sisters in his heart actively opposing anger as **helping in any way** has been built on here. Peter is being positioned as someone who is capable of successfully making a stand against the cactus of anger, which is clearly portrayed as a formidable opponent.

240 Dr: *(interpreting) It's not like a football game towards Milan and*
 241 *our club. Okay, its not like the National football and the,*
 242 *Milan that would be easy, that would be an easy way to play*
 243 *Its not like even one of the best football players in the world*
 244 *and our football players. I ask him if I could have an*
 245 *example of what it is like then and . . . There is a great*
 246 *difference what I hear him say is like one of the local football*
 247 *games and one of the most famous.*

248 DE: *Yeah, so hold on what, his heart is his National team*
 249 *and the thistle is Milan.*

Here, David sidesteps the issue of the difference in competence that Peter is suggesting between himself and the cactus of anger in this local vs famous football player analogy. Instead the tentative statement made by David amounts to a forced choice between supporting Milan or ** creating an opposition between the two similar to that created between ‘good guy’ and ‘bad guy’, and also between ‘cactus’ and ‘heart’. Given that Peter is ** it would be surprising if he were to suggest that his heart were on the side of Milan.

250 Dr: *(interpreting) No, I think the other way.*

251 DE: *(goes over to whiteboard) Who is this? Is this Milan on this*
252 *side or ** ?*

Tentative statement made in lines 246-247, is reframed as a forced choice question.

253 Dr: *I ask him to help me to understand because there is some*
254 *confusion for me. I now understand (interpreting) . . . Milan*
255 *and the ** team are quite the same. It's a good game.*

256 DE: *Even.*

David emphasises the similar skills of opposing teams suggesting a similar skill level between Peter and Anger. Emphasising similarity between the two teams backgrounds Peter's perception of himself as being inadequate to the task of taking on anger.

257 Dr: *(interpreting) Yes.*

258 DE: *Is he ** on his good-heart side?*

Establishing a metaphor. Following on from this previous question, this amounts to a reiteration of forced choice question.

259 Dr: *(interpreting) Yes, he is ** . Heart. And Milan is the*
 260 *'cactus'.*

261 DE: *Who is the best player? Who does he admire most on the*
 262 *** team?*

Information enabling further development of the metaphor, identifying who might be most useful to Peter in the developing narrative. David builds on his previous positioning of Peter and cactus as being equal, moving here to positioning Peter as being equal to the best player.

263 Dr: *(interpreting) Winter . . . Tomas Winter.*

264 DE: *(to Peter) Can you write this [on board]. I don't know him.*

265 Dr: *(interpreting) No, he is playing in the league in Italy too.*

By getting Peter to write Tomas's name on the white-board he is actively participating in positioning Tomas on his side.

266 DE: *I might have seen him . . . oh, I do know him. I have seen him*
 267 *play when I was here last year. If, Tomas Winter had this*
 268 *problem, how would he go against the 'cactus' of anger?*

Here, DE is positioning himself and Peter as peers through his knowledge of Tomas Winter and shared interest in football. By imagining how his idol might deal with anger a role model is being provided for Peter.

269 Dr: *(interpreting) Because he is a good football player, he would*
 270 *probably ask for a game of football with the 'cactus' of*
 271 *anger.*

272 DE: *Does he think he could do that but go against the 'cactus' of*
 273 *anger as Tomas Winter?*

By the asking of this question, Peter is positioned as someone having characteristics similar to those he might imagine his idol to possess. Note how David has moved from opposing sides being seen as vastly different to opposing sides being equal, to Peter being similar to Tomas, to Peter as Tomas.

274 Dr: *(interpreting) He doesn't understand.*

275 DE: *Okay . . . say it was between Tomas Winter and the 'cactus' of*
 276 *anger. What would Tomas Winter do when the 'cactus' of*
 277 *anger tried to score against him?*

Here, David takes a step back in response to Peter not understanding. If Peter is to act as Tomas it is first necessary for him to be aware of how Tomas would act in this situation. Use of **score against him** maintains and builds on the metaphor of a football game and emphasises the agency of anger.

278 Dr: *(interpreting) He probably would be tricky and go around . . .*

279 DE: *Great idea!*

Reinforcing Peter's suggestion.

280 Dr: *(interpreting) . . . and pass to other people, he said too . . . he*
 281 *can even be tricky and make it look like he would pass to*
 282 *someone . . .*

283 DE: *That's fake, fake pass, go around or pass off (writing).*

Again demonstrating knowledge of game, consequently positioning himself as Peter's peer.

284 Dr: *(interpreting) Yes.*

285 DE: *Say anger tried to rob him, tonight, and Tomas Winter was*
 286 *with him, and his sisters were with him, who does he think*
 287 *would likely win?*

This moves from the abstractness of analogy to the current problem situation making the analogy seem more concrete. Anger is positioned as external, active, and committing a violation, taking from Peter. Gauging strength of supports and Peter's ability with the help of these supports to overcome difficulties. Given the way that Tomas has been described as one of the best football players in the world who could on his own get the better of anger, it is unlikely that Peter's response would suggest anything else. If Tomas could win on his own then undoubtedly Tomas, Lisa, Anna, Maria and Peter together would be able to win relatively easily.

288 Dr: *(interpreting) They . . . Tomas Winter and his sisters. They.*
 289 *would win (pause) He just asked what you mean, would they*
 290 *have to play, or what do you mean by that? They would win.*

291 DE: *Who's they?*

What do you mean posed by Peter is ignored, instead **they** is picked up on resulting in evading the difficulties that Peter may be seeing at the same time as highlighting **they as a team** winning.

292 Dr: *(interpreting) Tomas Winter, his team, the team.*

293 DE: *The ** team. Do you think Tomas Winter would feel*
 294 *proud of himself if he knew Peter was his team mate.*

The use of the phrase **his team mate** both alludes to the game analogy and positions Peter as being not alone but acting in comradeship with those positioned as potential supports or team-mates. Raising the question of whether Tomas Winter might feel proud to have Peter as a team mate raises him up, positioning him as someone special, that his idol might feel proud

to work with him. This positioning is totally in opposition to that in which Peter has found himself as a 'delinquent'. By raising this opposing alternative narrative, the delinquent narrative is backgrounded. Such opposing narratives can not both simultaneously be conceptualised as real. The suggestion that Tomas **would feel proud**, though a big jump from where Peter currently is, does not come out of nowhere. It builds both on the discussion of Peter's **feeling proud of himself** in relation to the discoveries he has made and on the movement from opposing sides being seen as vastly different in skill level to Peter **acting as Tomas**.

295 Dr: *(interpreting) I don't know.*

296 DE: *Do you think we should write him a letter?*

Here, Tomas Winter is cast as a significant other to Peter. That this suggestion comes from David gives credibility to the idea that Tomas might be interested in receiving a letter from Peter. Following on from previous question it is implied that Tomas Winter might be interested in learning about someone who is capable of successfully opposing anger and winning, and consequently he would consider Peter to be of value as a team member.

297 P: *Yes. (bemused)*

298 DE: *Should we do that now?*

This moves from **do you think Tomas would be proud** to **should we write him a letter** to **should we do it now**, building on the proposition that Tomas would be proud to think of Peter as his team mate. David has both elicited enthusiastic consent from Peter and engineered a situation in which Peter will be prepared to work at impressing his idol.

299 P: Yes.

300 DE: *Well maybe I will write it in English and we'll . . . Dear*
 301 *Tomas . . . do you want to tell how this anger has been doing*
 302 *things to your life?*

I will write it . . . and we'll suggests a joint venture. It is implied that Tomas will want to know what has been happening in Peter's life. The past tense is used implying that the anger is a historical, rather than current or future problem. Shifting of tenses distances the problem from the here and now. While being reminded of the consequences of anger in his life, the onus is on Peter to interpret and define the effect that anger has had, thus Peter is seen to lead while DE follows.

303 Dr: *(interpreting) Destroyed.*

304 DE: *So, my anger has destroyed . . .*

Movement between owning anger and externalising it maintains a balance that both allows Peter to take responsibility for his actions, at the same time as distancing guilt and blame that could lead to denial and thus reduce possibility of change.

305 P: *(in English) MY HEART (Sadly).*

306 DE: *My heart. For how long?*

Mapping of the problem, circumscribing time.

307 Dr: *(interpreting) Since I was around three years old?*

308 DE: *(writing) Since I was around three years old. Do you want to*
 309 *tell him where you are now so he will know where to write*
 310 *this letter to?*

Peter has been led to state explicitly the consequences of his actions. In doing so, it seems likely that he will own responsibility for what he has done at the same time as being motivated to avoid actions which would lead to the continuation of unpleasant consequences.

311 Dr: *(interpreting) Yes.*

312 DE: *(writing) Anger put me in ** hospital?*

Anger put me in gives agency to anger and externalises it.

313 Dr: *In the Child Guidance Clinic in **.*

314 DE: *And where do you want to go from here so he will know*
315 *where you want to go?*

Orienting Peter towards the future. Leads Peter to envisage a future in which things are different from the current situation. Mapping of this alternate future gives it concreteness increasing the likelihood that it will become the reality.

316 Dr: *(interpreting) He wants back to his ordinary school.*

317 DE: *(writing) Anger put me in . . . but I want to be a 'good guy'?*

DE has reframed Peter's desire to return to his ordinary school as **wanting to be a good guy**; phrased as a question confirmation of this is elicited.

318 P: *Yes.*

319 DE: *A 'good guy' and return to my ordinary school (writing).*
320 *Why do you want to go back there?*

Seeks Peter's awareness of the advantages of altering his behaviour. This continued mapping adds detail to the envisaged future that Peter is creating.

The more substance this is seen to have the greater the likelihood that it will be achieved rather than remain imaginary.

321 Dr: *(interpreting) You see to be here you have the feeling that*
322 *you are nuts!*

323 DE: *(writing) Sometimes where I am, I get the feeling I am nuts*
324 *when I'm not! I have been speaking with Dr. Erikson and*
325 *David Epston . . . and we decided that if I put my two sisters,*
326 *one of whom died recently, in my heart and played like you*
327 *do - fake passing, going around anger, or passing off before*
328 *anger attacks . . . tackles me,*

Being nuts could be seen as causing delinquent behaviour making it seem unlikely that Peter would be able to control his behaviour. Exclaiming denial of 'nuts' reduces the possibility of Peter internalising this interpretation as the cause of his behaviour. **We decided** refers to joint decision, but it is Peter who will internalise supports suggesting his active opposition to problem. Metaphors suggest that he can make use of tactics similar to those used in football game.

329 Dr: *(interpreting) If he comes there, anger, and tried to start*
330 *tackling, and I pass the ball to someone else, that does mean*
331 *that he can't tackle me?*

332 DE: *He might get a yellow card (mimicking a referee holding up*
333 *a yellow card). 'Before anger tackles me, I think I can win'.*

Extends game analogy suggesting that anger loses by playing dirty. Future oriented, with Peter positioned as defeating anger.

334 DE: *Can we ask him some questions?*

Seeking permission, Peter positioned as leading again.

335 Dr: *(interpreting) Yes.*

336 DE: *Is it alright, is it okay for me to play like you against anger?*

This question suggests that Peter can in fact play like Tomas against anger. It is presupposed here that Tomas does play football against anger and given that Tomas is such a good football player, there must be a good chance of winning. More than this, by asking if Peter can play like Tomas against anger, it is implied that permission is all that is currently stopping him from doing so, that is, he has the capability of doing this if he chooses.

337 Dr: *He just asked me if I could help him to translate it into*
338 *** before we send it.*

339 DE: *Yes, why don't you. Do you want to do it now?*

It is implied here that Peter is directing the process and whatever he chooses will be what is done.

340 Dr: *(interpreting) Not now, he says.*

341 DE: *What about this? What about asking Tomas? What do you*
342 *think about this one? Ask him if he ever had any problems*
343 *with anger himself when he was younger? And how he got*
344 *around them? Was that a good question to ask him?*

As it has previously been presupposed that Tomas plays against anger, that he had problems with anger when he was younger will not come into question. What is considered instead is whether the question which is being asked is a good one. Tomas is positioned as having the same problems as Peter and as he has gone on to play for ** he must have successfully dealt with these problems. As Peter and Tomas are positioned as peers in several instances it follows that Peter is capable of doing anything that Tomas has managed.

345 P: *Yes.*

346 DE: *Tomas, did you have problems with anger as a young boy or*
 347 *young man, and if so, how did you get around them?*
 348 *(writing) What else do you want to ask him, now we are*
 349 *speaking to him?*

Again, it is highlighted that Tomas, who is Peter's idol, has previously had anger problems and dealt with them effectively, moving on to success and fame. **What else do you want to ask him** emphasises that Peter is the one who is writing the letter, and provides the opportunity for him to have input and therefore to see himself as the one in correspondence with Tomas.

350 P: *His autograph.*

351 Dr: *(interpreting) He wants his autograph.*

352 DE: *Tomas, what about this . . . if Dr. Erikson writes you a letter in*
 353 *one month's time . . . that I have pretty much got round my*
 354 *anger . . . would you please get me your autograph?*

A time is stipulated in which Peter's behaviour needs to have changed if he is to receive Tomas's autograph, this provides some motivation for him to alter his behaviour. Although Peter is asked to okay this stipulation, given that he has been positioned as a peer to Tomas it is doubtful that he would argue the point, for to do so would suggest that in fact he is unlike Tomas, and that Tomas would have no reason to be proud to think of him as a team mate. Also, at this point in the interview the pattern of Peter agreeing with David has been well established, reducing the likelihood of his disagreeing. **Pretty much got around my anger** allows for both minor incidents and temporary relapse of enacted anger. Without this modifier a minor incident could be defined as failure resulting in Peter's giving up and deciding that this is proof that he cannot change.

355 Dr: *We will be on holidays so we will have two months.*

- 356 DE: *That is a good time.*
- 357 Dr: *One month would be very short to learn to play this new*
 358 *game*
- 359 DE: *Okay . . . (writing) and get around anger, will you give me your*
 360 *autograph (to interpreter) Does he [Peter] think that*
 361 *if he can do this, do you think that you will deserve to be on*
 362 *the ** Anti-Anger Team?*

Here, David works at altering Peter's position from that of a person with a problem to a person who has so successfully dealt with his problem that he is now in a position to help others. Use of the term **deserve** suggests that membership of the Anti-Anger Team is something worth attaining. Here, Peter is positioned as being worthy of being on another ** team, one this time that is actually possible for him to attain. This too is future oriented, Peter being positioned as having successfully moved on from where he is. Interestingly, if he succeeds the path back to delinquency is at least partially blocked as the two narratives are incompatible.

- 363 Dr: *(interpreting) Yes.*
- 364 DE: *And do you think that you would be willing later on to coach*
 365 *other young people whose lives are being destroyed by*
 366 *anger?*

Peter is being invited to view himself from a future position of success, his achievement highlighted by him being positioned as role model and guide to others who are where he is at the present time. Use of the term **coach**, builds onto the game analogy, positioning Peter as an expert and as a peer to someone who coaches his role model. Peter, as a coach, may well be someone that Tomas might be expected to have respect for. **Destroyed by anger** reveals the opposite of where he wants to be, thus, serving as a reminder of what is to be gained by this new status as well as what he

stands to lose if he fails to succeed. Membership of the ** Anti-Anger Team provides confirmation of the successful transition of roles and confirmation of a new status.

367 Dr: *(interpreting) Yes.*

368 DE: *Can I tell Tomas that?*

Eliciting agreement.

369 P: *Yes.*

370 DE: *(writing) Tomas, I am hoping to join the ** National*
 371 *Anti-Anger Team and I will then coach other young boys and*
 372 *girls? Will you coach the girls too?*

Deserving is reframed as **hoping** here and in terms of what one might feel, not getting what one hopes is quite different from not getting what one thinks one deserves. A feeling of loss is more likely in the former while anger is a more likely response to the latter. Writing this, amounts to a commitment by Peter to act as one capable of doing what he has stated he hopes for. Moving on to the question of whether Peter will coach the girls as well distances statement of hope and therefore reduces possibility that it will be disputed. Preference question, positions him as the one in charge and ensures that the focus remains on whom he will coach rather than the issue of hope. Peter coaching the girls as well, also acts as an extension of his new status and thus, is likely to be considered desirable.

373 P: *Okay.*

374 DE: *Other young boys and girls whose lives, whose hearts are*
 375 *being destroyed by anger (writing). Is that okay? Do you*
 376 *that, do you want to say anything more in your letter? Is*
 377 *there a particular goal or game and say that that was good*

378 . . . cheer him up or something?

Whether what has been written is okay will not be pursued as the focus is moved to **is there anything else you want to say**, and from here to **is there a particular goal . . .** Tomas is positioned as needing to be cheered up and it is implied that encouragement from Peter would provide this function. This positions him as someone of equal status to Tomas given that one would not normally expect that encouragement from someone with less skill, knowledge or position would have much effect on one's mood. It is therefore highly unlikely that Peter will question his ability to do so. Instead it would be expected that he would search for an encouraging comment to make as this would position him more firmly as someone of importance.

379 Dr: (interpreting) There was a game against Israel and he kicked
380 three of the five goals.

381 DE: Hat trick. What should I say you want to tell him about?

David is positioned as a peer through his knowledge of the game, he then moves the focus to what Peter wants, giving him choice.

382 Dr: (interpreting) He wants you to write that he thinks that he
383 was real good in the match between ** and Israel when
384 he scored three goals.

385 DE: (writing) You were real good in the match between Israel and
386 ** when you scored, uh, call it a hat-trick, three goals.
387 What is the word when you score three goals?

Here, David's words imply that he doesn't know what a hat-trick is even though it was he who first introduced the term. He instead asks Peter what is it called. This functions to position David as unknowing in relation to Peter and consequently positions Peter as expert. The more that Peter perceives himself to be competent the better position he is in to overcome

anger and instead live his life in a way that he finds more satisfying than his present situation.

388 P: *Hat-trick.*

389 Dr: *(interpreting) He doesn't know if it really was a hat-trick,*
390 *that probably means the first and the second and the third in*
391 *a row.*

392 DE: *No, I think just three in one game.*

Again, David demonstrates knowledge.

393 Dr: *(interpreting) Okay, he knows that he made three out of five*
394 *and David said that's the hat-trick.*

395 DE: *Can you ask him why, I'm just wondering why it is called a*
396 *'hat-trick. Does he know?*

Having again positioned himself as more knowledgeable than Peter, David takes the focus off himself, moving it back to Peter, thus positioning him as someone with a greater knowledge of the game. **Does he know** serves to create a greater distance between previous demonstration of knowledge and thus reduces its impact and the possibility that it will be noticed by Peter.

397 Dr: *(interpreting) I think he's right. But he says it's just because*
398 *it's difficult, and you know (speaking for self) I've got the*
399 *idea that that's what the magic man, they do hat-tricks, that*
400 *was just up in my mind.*

401 DE: *Yeah, yeah . . . I was just thinking, what does that mean,*
402 *hat-trick?*

David maintains the focus on his not knowing, reinforcing Peter's position as the one with greater knowledge. Implied here, is that Peter might have knowledge than DE lacks, suggesting that he is as capable and that they are positioned at least as equals.

403 Dr: *(interpreting) That's not that, to pull rabbits out of hats,*
 404 *that's not difficult cause it's not real . . . that's just tricky . . .*
 405 *but to have three real goals that's real.*

406 DE: *Would you ask Peter that, if it would be alright when this*
 407 *happens in the future if it's okay for you two to write me a*
 408 *letter and let me know so I can write back? Is that okay?*

Gaining consent, also an showing interest in and concern for Peter.

Embedded in this request is the assumption that Peter will succeed and that David clearly sees him as capable. This invites Peter to look backward from the future to view his success.

409 Dr: *(interpreting) Yes.*

410 DE: *Oh good, good. Tell him I promise to write back by the fax*
 411 *machine.*

Endorsing interest in Peter.

412 Dr: *(interpreting) Wow! He didn't know how fast the faxes were.*

413 DE: *Yeah, yeah, yeah.*

414 Dr: *We can almost look at it when you are typewrite it and we*
 415 *read it at the same moment.*

416 DE: *Well the problem is, the difference in time. Tell him that*
 417 *when its nine o'clock pm in ** its seven o'clock in the*
 418 *morning the next day in New Zealand.*

David positions himself as being scrupulously honest in not allowing a misconception to continue.

419 Dr: *I could tell him about the letter I got from you.*

420 DE: *It was ahead of time. Well we should stop there and uh, I*
 421 *hope, uh I really liked meeting you and uh I've actually seen*
 422 *Tomas Winter play last year when he scored two goals in a*

423 *game against ** I think? He wasn't expected to, I think*
 424 *they lost in the end but it was pretty close. Do you know*
 425 *when they had the championships here last year?*

David is again positioned as a peer to Peter through an interest in and knowledge of both the game and Tomas. Providing an example of Tomas playing for ** in a game they nearly won, is suggestive of the possibility of Peter winning in his fight against anger.

426 *Dr: I am not in athletics.*

427 *DE: (addresses Peter) Do you remember they had the world*
 428 *championships here last?*

429 *Dr: (interpreting) European.*

430 *DE: European, and last year he played, they were playing*
 431 *** and he scored two goals, remember.*

Given the previous positioning of Peter as Tomas' peer then he might be expected to be able to score at least two goals in the game against anger. Each goal could be considered to be a success and thus, proof that he has what it takes to defeat anger.

432 *Dr: (interpreting) But they lost.*

433 *DE: But they lost, that's right, sad. But ** almost won.*

Acknowledges loss, commiserating emphasises that this was a loss and cause of sadness for David too. The focus is then returned to ** winning.

434 *Dr: (interpreting) They are the one in their group now.*

435 *DE: Yeah. So I believe, if you have Tomas Winter on your side,*
 436 *sisters in your heart, uh I, I bet on you. Okay?*

Tomas on your side, sisters in your heart emphasises the team metaphor, and confidence in Peter's ability is stated. **Okay** as a question, requires and elicits a response.

437 Dr: *(interpreting) Just bet . . . (to David) Is it okay that he gets*
438 *this paper (from whiteboard)*

439 DE: *Goodluck, goodluck, good game . . . Goodbye Peter . . . Ciao.*

Chapter Five

Discussion

The aim of this research has been to gain an understanding of what it is that happens in the practice of narrative therapy. Narrative therapists have provided accounts of their work which explain what they do in terms of the structuring of a narrative interview, the types of questions they ask, and the assumptions that they bring with them to the therapeutic interview (see introduction for details of these). They claim, amongst other things, that: (1) They bring to the therapeutic encounter, a belief in both the competency of their clients and the rights of the individual to determine for themselves how they might best live their lives. (2) They externalise problems. (3) They collaborate with clients and use language in a way that highlights choice and consequently increases the likelihood that persons will accept responsibility for their actions. (4) They identify times when clients' lives were not dominated by problems and elicit an account of how this happened. (5) They facilitate the process of constructing new meaning around these happenings, and they ground these new meanings within the person's social system. (6) They co-construct stories, asking questions designed to create a history, present, and future for the new story. (7) They situate their clients firmly within this collaboratively constructed story of the person's life.

The question that is raised at this point is whether the theoretical accounts that have been given are put into practice, that is, do narrative therapists actually do what they say they do? While the interview analysed in this research shows that narrative therapists do what they claim to do (see section on structuring a narrative interview for examples), it also makes it apparent that there is more that happens in the therapy session than that which has been made explicit in the accounts given of this work. In analysing this interview, I have found the substantial use of positioning,

metaphor, indirectness and scaffolding to have a profound effect on the course of the interview. The effect of these is discussed below.

Positioning

Positioning, may emerge 'naturally' out of the conversational and social contexts, or one may purposefully position or attempt to position oneself or others (Harre & van Langenhove, 1999). In this interview, David actively positions both himself and Peter in the following ways. He and Peter are positioned as both peers and allies. Peter is consistently positioned as being in opposition to the problem. In addition, Peter is consistently positioned as someone who is both competent and worthy of social respect. These three positionings perform the following functions. They increase the likelihood of David and Peter being able to work effectively together. They provide distance between Peter and the problem as well as the motivation for him to act in opposition to it. Finally, they provide an alternative, socially desirable identity for Peter.

Metaphors

Metaphors, in requiring the use of imagination, are always open to alternative interpretations. The ambiguity of metaphor compels persons to fill in gaps and create meaning. In doing so, each person's conceptualisation of that which the metaphor refers to, will be distinctly individual. Thus, metaphors generate the construction of multiple meaning and consequently, provide multiple possibilities that the meaning constructed will be acceptable to the person. Metaphors that are imaginative and creative are capable of giving us a new understanding of our experience (Rosenblatt, 1994). Personification attributes human characteristics to abstract concepts or concrete objects which allow us to make sense of these things in human terms that we are able to understand (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Creative

metaphors have the power to give new meaning to our past, to our daily life, and to what we know and believe (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Rosenblatt, 1994). The creative use of metaphor in this interview performed the following functions. Peter was led to conceptualise both his identity and experience through a specific metaphorical framework. This overriding framework was that of a battle ground between the forces of good and evil. In conceptualising the forces of evil as being outside himself and the forces of good as being within him, it became increasingly difficult for Peter to identify with the delinquent, antisocial and aggressive aspects of his behaviour. At the same time, through the metaphorical use of 'good guy', 'heart', and the analogy of a football game, the metaphorical forces of good within him were being developed. During the course of the interview, Peter's responses to the development of this socially valued self, suggest his acceptance of the newly constructed story as a reality. If this were the case, Peter would be expected to perceive and experience life in terms of this reality and subsequently to act on the basis of this.

Indirectness and Scaffolding

Indirectness and implicitness predominate in the narrative interview. The use of indirect suggestion is common. It takes the form of presupposition, where through the use of implication, an event or association is taken as a given. The use of "when this happens" for instance, presupposes that "this" will in fact happen. Indeterminate words are used with a similar effect. The use of "could", "might", and "would", raise that which is being referred to, as a possibility. The use of indirectness encompasses the use of both metaphor and positioning and the effect of these in combination is greater than that which would be achieved by their individual use. Narrative therapists do not direct in the normal sense of the word. Rather, they invite clients to view and pick from the multiple perspectives that are offered to

them. Narrative therapists provide ideas in a form that the client must engage with, if they are to make sense of them. In addition, the process of scaffolding is one in which each new idea presented builds on what came previously, increasing the likelihood that movement of meaning will occur. This involves the placing of words and sentences in such a way that those later sentences or ideas that might have been disputed if they had occurred earlier are more easily accepted because of the order of presentation. Ideas are scaffolded in such a way that the client is invited to move in a specific direction. This direction is designed to be one that will sit well with the client.

Positioning, metaphor, indirectness and scaffolding are critical to the successful practice of narrative therapy. Their importance lies in that they facilitate an alliance between therapist and client and also minimise the possibility of opposition to the therapeutic process. In addition, they maximise the potential for the development and acceptance of alternative conceptualisations of the self and reality. Furthermore, they actively engage the person in the co-construction of meaning. The consequence of this is that the newly constructed narrative is likely to be conceptualised as reflecting reality, and that it will be acted on as such. While accounts of narrative therapy do not make the use of these mechanisms explicit, they clearly link back to the theoretical sources from which narrative therapy draws.

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Interview Transcript

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- 1 DE: *How are you? Do you speak English.*
- 2 P: *Yeah.*
- 3 DE: *Oh you do. You don't have to. We have a translator for you.*
4 *Sit down. What have you got there in your bag?*
- 5 P: *Game boy.*
- 6 DE: *Oh gameboy, right. (to interpreter) Um, do you want to tell*
7 *Peter about me or does he know about me?*
- 8 Dr: *I think that he knows about you. I've asked him if it was more*
9 *that he wanted to know about you than I told him but he, it's*
10 *okay.*
- 11 DE: *(to Peter) And do you want to speak English with me or*
12 *would you prefer that we speak * * ?*
- 13 Dr: *(interpreting for Peter) He says that he probably understand*
14 *quite a lot of what you are telling him but it's better that I*
15 *translate all the time.*
- 16 DE: *Okay. Fair enough.*
- 17 Dr: *Yes, he understands. I think that will be very nice because that*
18 *means that he will hear it on two languages.*
- 19 DE: *Okay, okay, okay. Just in case you know while we are talking,*
20 *you'd like to know something about me, that's fine, you just ask*
21 *me, because I know its hard to do it when you don't know me*
22 *but if you might, as I get talking, I might say something that's*
23 *funny, maybe New Zealandish and then we'll explain it to you.*
24 *Well, I have been talking to Dr Erikson and he's told me some*
25 *things about you and I've written them down (showing him*
26 *comments written down in a note-pad). I'll tell you what they*
27 *all are, I'll tell you what they all are but*
- 28 DE: *But um I just wonder what your answer, what you think he*
29 *would have answered to this question:*
- 30 Dr: *Which I have answered.*

- 31 DE: *The question I asked him was, 'What do you respect most*
32 *about Peter?'*
- 33 P: *Oi . . . oi . . . oi . . .*
- 34 DE: *What do you think he said? Hard question! Hard*
35 *question! Take your time!*
- 36 Dr: *(interpreting for Peter) That you are talking much. He thinks*
37 *that I enjoy that he talks a lot with me. He talks more with me*
38 *than some other boys . . . some other people. He can imagine*
39 *that I enjoy that he talks to me.*
- 40 DE: *Mmmmh . . . no! I'm not saying that he doesn't, that wasn't what*
41 *he said number one! That wasn't what he said number one.*
42 *Take another guess! (long pause) Is this hard?*
- 43 P: *Yes . . .*
- 44 DE: *Take your time. (long pause) Just take a guess! You don't*
45 *have to be right or wrong.*
- 46 Dr: *(interpreting for Peter) He's a good guy!*
- 47 DE: *Why do you think he might think you're a 'good guy'? What's*
48 *good about you?*
- 49 Dr: *(interpreting) He thinks because I care about him that . . . I told*
50 *you that I was running after him the other day and that was for,*
51 *as I understand him, the meaning of that was I am caring about*
52 *him so I have to think he is a 'good guy'.*
- 53 DE: *Otherwise you wouldn't have?*
- 54 Dr: *No I wouldn't have cared about him.*
- 55 DE: *And you think you are a 'good guy'?*
- 56 P: *Yeah.*
- 57 DE: *Why do you think you are a 'good guy'?*
- 58 Dr: *(interpreting) If he wants to be a 'good guy' he can manage it. If*
59 *he doesn't want to be a good guy, he won't be it.*
- 60 DE: *Oh . . . oh. What are you doing now. Is this 'good guy' behaviour*
61 *(pointing)? Are you being a 'good guy' now?*

- 62 P: *Yah . . .*
- 63 DE: *And how long do you think you will continue to be a 'good guy'?*
- 64 Dr: *(interpreting) Until he got irritated . . . and really irritated.*
- 65 DE: *I see. Is it easier for you to be a 'good guy' or a 'bad guy'?*
66 *Pretty good English.*
- 67 Dr: *(interpreting) He thinks it is around the same but it's very easy*
68 *for him to get irritated if something isn't the way he thought he*
69 *should be. If he can't quite catch it.*
- 70 DE: *So it's 50% 'good guy' - 50% 'bad guy'. (drawing both headings*
71 *on the right and left of a white board)*
- 72 P: *Yes.*
- 73 DE: *And which 'guy' do you like best?*
- 74 P: *Left . . . the 'good guy'.*
- 75 DE: *This is your preference?*
- 76 P: *Yah.*
- 77 DE: *What do you like about your 'good guy'?*
- 78 Dr: *(interpreting) It's a very good one to have. If he is the 'good*
79 *guy', he can have support and be comforted even if he is angry.*
- 80 DE: *I see, and when does the 'bad guy' rob the goodness from the*
81 *'good guy'?*
- 82 Dr: *(interpreting) When he got angry.*
- 83 DE: *So is goodness robbed by anger?*
- 84 P: *Yes . . .*
- 85 DE: *Is that fair?*
- 86 P: *No.*
- 87 DE: *So anger, anger robs 'good guy'? (writing on white-board) It's*
88 *not fair?*
- 89 Dr: *(interpreting) No, he doesn't think its fair.*

- 90 DE: *Has the 'good guy' ever fought back against anger?*
- 91 Dr: *(interpreting) No . . . he can't remember that.*
- 92 DE: *Is there a time when he could have got angry but somehow or*
93 *other, the 'good guy' was too strong and didn't allow the anger*
94 *to rob his goodness?*
- 95 Dr: *(interpreting) When I was running after him, it was the 'good*
96 *guy' who got him to stop and come back to me.*
- 97 DE: *Really! Is that the first time the 'good guy' did that?*
- 98 Dr: *(interpreting) He said he can't remember?*
- 99 DE: *Can you remember this recent time?*
- 100 P: *Yes.*
- 101 DE: *Would you like to talk about it? I'd like to talk about it. Would*
102 *you like to talk about it?*
- 103 P: *Yes.*
- 104 DE: *I'm interested in it. Are you? Well, okay, do you know when you*
105 *say anger, is that a good word for you? What word?*
106 *. temper?*
- 107 Dr: *What kind of word would you like, I asked him.*
- 108 DE: *If anger was like a person and you could paint a picture of him,*
109 *what would anger look like? How would it look?*
- 110 P: *(Draws a picture of thorns on the white-board)*
- 111 Dr: *(interpreting) It's just like thorns.*
- 112 DE: *(Acting out thorns pricking his skin) Hurt? Irritate? Cactus!*
113 *Like a cactus?*
- 114 P: *Yes.*
- 115 DE: *CACTUS! Can we call it 'cactus'? Would that be better?*
- 116 P: *Yes.*

- 117 DE: *So anger hurts you, (pricking skin with imaginary thorns) . . .*
118 *When you are a 'good guy'. what would be the picture of the*
119 *'good guy'? What kind of plant? (Peter draws a picture of a*
120 *heart on the white-board) Oh great! So the 'good guy' has got a*
121 *big heart, that's nice. Do you think that the 'cactus' is irritating*
122 *your heart?*
- 123 P: *Yes (starts to cry).*
- 124 DE: *Does it make you sad thinking about that?*
- P: *(Nods assent).*
- 125 DE: *It's not a good thing! Not a good thing! Well that makes me glad*
126 *to hear about a few days ago . . . was that a few days ago . . . ?*
- 127 Dr: *Yes . . . the same day you came. Tuesday.*
- 128 DE: *So it is fresh in your mind?*
- 129 P: *Yah.*
- 130 DE: *Okay. Can you tell us the story of how the cactus tried to wreck*
131 *your heart and it didn't?*
- 132 Dr: *(interpreting) He thinks about the moment when the little sister*
133 *died. That was the answer on that question. Maybe you thought*
134 *about something else? When you ask him could you see the story*
135 *when the cactus wrecked the heart. That was when Lisa . . . the*
136 *small girl was dead.*
- 137 DE: *Do you think Lisa would be happy to know that you are starting*
138 *to not be so thorny and to have a heart? . . . not let the thorns hurt*
139 *him but instead his heart got bigger?*
- 140 Dr: *I reframed it and said: 'What do you think if the heart would win*
141 *instead of the cactus, would she like that? and he said she would*
142 *like that 'heart' would win.*
- 143 DE: *Do you think, Peter, that Lisa is in your heart?*
- 144 P: *Yah (crying).*
- 145 DE: *Do you want to put her name in there? (pointing to his 'heart'*
146 *drawn on the white-board). Thank you. Why does Peter think he*
147 *is such a big-hearted person? How did he grow such a big heart*
148 *for a young person?*

- 149 Dr: *(interpreting) I like life.*
- 150 DE: *I like life . . . mmmh. Do you think your anger likes you having*
151 *a good life?*
- 152 Dr: *(interpreting) No (chagrined).*
- 153 DE: *If the memory of Lisa was kept close to his heart, would that*
154 *defend him against the 'cactus' of anger?*
- 155 Dr: *I think that was a difficult question. Did I get it right? I*
156 *asked: 'If Lisa was close to his heart',*
- 157 DE: *By memory.*
- 158 Dr: *By memory . . . would that help him defend towards 'cactus'?*
159 *(interpreting) Sadly no, because 'cactus' would be too*
160 *strong.*
- 161 DE: *For even for the memory of Lisa?*
- 162 Dr: *(interpreting) Yes.*
- 163 DE: *Would it help in some way?*
- 164 P: *Yes.*
- 165 DE: *So it would be strengthening your heart?*
- 166 Dr: *(interpreting) Yes.*
- 167 DE: *Okay. You know when the other day when you your heart won*
168 *and the 'cactus' lost . . . that incident you were talking*
169 *about . . . how did that happen? How do you explain that?*
170 *What happened in your heart?*
- 171 Dr: *(interpreting) He felt sorrow if he had destroyed the*
172 *possibility of talking together with me.*
- 173 DE: *So good friendships strengthen the heart?*
- 174 Dr: *(interpreting) Yes.*
- 175 DE: *So loneliness strengthens 'cactus'?*
- 176 Dr: *(interpreting) Yes.*

177 DE: *(Drawing on the white-board). Good friendships and*
178 *loneliness? (The former placed under the 'good guy' column*
179 *and the latter placed under the 'bad guy' column). So there*
180 *is a big heart, a 'good guy', the memory of Lisa, good*
181 *friendships make for goodness?*

182 P: *Yes.*

183 DE: *Can you think of anything else that is on the side of a good*
184 *life?*

185 Dr: *(interpreting) Something else that helps heart? The 'good*
186 *guy'? The other small girl, Maria.*

187 DE: *Do you want to write her name up there?*

188 P: *(Inscribes name alongside Lisa inside his 'heart')*

189 DE: *Cactus and thorns can't hurt thick skin.*

190 P: *No.*

191 DE: *Is his skin getting thicker, somehow or other?*

192 Dr: *(interpreting) Yes....*

193 DE: *Why?*

194 Dr: *(interpreting) When he came here from the very beginning a*
195 *year ago, it was easier for him to get irritated. That means*
196 *that his skin is not that thick compared to a year ago when he*
197 *came here for the first time.*

198 DE: *Is it getting stronger?*

199 Dr: *(interpreting) No . . . it's not that strong, it doesn't have to be*
200 *that thick any longer.*

201 DE: *I see . . . I see. When his skin had to be thick, did that mean he*
202 *lost some of his good-heartedness?*

203 Dr: *(interpreting) Yes.*

204 DE: *And if we hadn't talked about this today, would he have*
205 *known all about this? . . . Or is he just discovering it now?*

- 206 Dr: *(interpreting) (With enthusiasm) Yes we are discovering*
207 *things now.*
- 208 DE: *Great. Is that exciting?*
- 209 P: *Yes.*
- 210 DE: *Are you feeling any better, in any way?*
- 211 P: *Yes.*
- 212 DE: *Is he feeling a little bit proud of himself, a middle bit proud*
213 *of himself, or a big bit proud of himself? (indicated extent of*
214 *pride by widening the gap between his two hands).*
- P: *(takes marker and goes to the board and draws a vertical line*
the length of the white board).
- 215 Dr: *(interpreting) Yes, he is very proud of himself.*
- 216 DE: *That's about two metres . . . two metres of pride. If we hadn't*
217 *talked today, would he have missed out on feeling proud of*
218 *himself?*
- 219 Dr: *(interpreting) Yes.*
- 220 DE: *Does he think we should do some planning for the future,*
221 *because the Cactus is still around?*
- 222 P: *Yes.*
- 223 DE: *Yes, he would like to do some planning?*
- 224 Dr: *(interpreting) Yes, he would like to do some planning.*
- 225 DE: *Which of the ideas of the ones up on the board would Peter*
226 *think would be good to use in the next week?*
- 227 P: *Heart!*
- 228 Dr: *(interpreting) Heart!*
- 229 DE: *Heart! How does he imagine he could expand his Heart and*
230 *strengthen his heart should the 'cactus' irritate him?*
- 231 Dr: *(interpreting) Yes.*
- 232 DE: *How does he think . . .*

- 233 Dr: *Maybe I put the question wrong. 'If the heart tried to make a,*
234 *stand would the 'cactus' try to irritate him?*
- 235 DE: *If all his sisters, living and dead, were inside his heart*
236 *pushing outwards, would that help in any way to stop the*
237 *cactus of anger irritating him and becoming a 'bad guy'?*
- 238 Dr: *(interpreting) Yes I think so . . . but it wouldn't be easy.*
- 239 DE: *Oh no. The 'cactus' of anger is very tricky and cunning.*
- 240 Dr: *(interpreting) It's not like a football game towards Milan and*
241 *our club. Okay, its not like the * * football and the,*
242 *Milan that would be easy, that would be an easy way to play*
243 *Its not like even one of the best football players in the world*
244 *and our football players. I ask him if I could have an*
245 *example of what it is like then and ... There is a great*
246 *difference what I hear him say is like one of the local football*
247 *games and one of the most famous.*
- 248 DE: *Yeah, so hold on what, his heart is * * National team*
249 *and the thistle is Milan.*
- 250 Dr: *(interpreting) No, I think the other way.*
- 251 DE: *(goes over to whiteboard) Who is this? Is this Milan on this*
252 *side or * * ?*
- 253 Dr: *I ask him to help me to understand because there is some*
254 *confusion for me. I now understand (interpreting) . . . Milan*
255 *and the * * team are quite the same. It's a good game.*
- 256 DE: *Even.*
- 257 Dr: *(interpreting) Yes.*
- 258 DE: *Is he * * on his good-heart side?*
- 259 Dr: *(interpreting) Yes, he is * *. Heart. And Milan is the*
260 *'cactus'.*
- 261 DE: *Who is the best player? Who does he admire most on the*
262 ** * team?*
- 263 Dr: *(interpreting) Winter . . . Tomas Winter.*
- 264 DE: *(to Peter) Can you write this [on board]. I don't know him.*

- 265 Dr: *(interpreting) No, he is playing in the league in Italy too.*
- 266 DE: *I might have seen him . . . oh, I do know him. I have seen him*
267 *play when I was here last year. If, Tomas Winter had this*
268 *problem, how would he go against the 'cactus' of anger?*
- 269 Dr: *(interpreting) Because he is a good football player, he would*
270 *probably ask for a game of football with the 'cactus' of*
271 *anger.*
- 272 DE: *Does he think he could do that but go against the 'cactus' of*
273 *anger as Tomas Winter?*
- 274 Dr: *(interpreting) He doesn't understand.*
- 275 DE: *Okay . . . say it was between Tomas Winter and the 'cactus' of*
276 *anger. What would Tomas Winter do when the 'cactus' of*
277 *anger tried to score against him?*
- 278 Dr: *(interpreting) He probably would be tricky and go around . . .*
- 279 DE: *Great idea!*
- 280 Dr: *(interpreting) . . . and pass to other people, he said too . . . he can*
281 *even be tricky and make it look like he would pass to*
282 *someone . . .*
- 283 DE: *That's fake, fake pass, go around or pass off (writing).*
- 284 Dr: *(interpreting) Yes.*
- 285 DE: *Say anger tried to rob him, tonight, and Tomas Winter was*
286 *with him, and his sisters were with him, who does he think*
287 *would likely win?*
- 288 Dr: *(interpreting) They . . . Tomas Winter and his sisters. They*
289 *would win (pause) He just asked what you mean, would they*
290 *have to play, or what do you mean by that? They would win.*
- 291 DE: *Who's they?*
- 292 Dr: *(interpreting) Tomas Winter, his team, the team.*
- 293 DE: *The * * team. Do you think Tomas Winter would feel*
294 *proud of himself if he knew Peter was his team-mate.*

- 295 Dr: *(interpreting) I don't know.*
- 296 DE: *Do you think we should write him a letter?*
- 297 P: *Yes. (bemused)*
- 298 DE: *Should we do that now?*
- 299 P: *Yes.*
- 300 DE: *Well maybe I will write it in English and we'll . . . Dear*
301 *Tomas . . . do you want to tell how this anger has been doing*
302 *things to your life?*
- 303 Dr: *(interpreting) Destroyed.*
- 304 DE: *So, my anger has destroyed . . .*
- 305 P: *(in English) MY HEART (Sadly).*
- 306 DE: *My heart. For how long?*
- 307 Dr: *(interpreting) Since I was around three years old?*
- 308 DE: *(writing) Since I was around three years old. Do you want to*
309 *tell him where you are now so he will know where to write*
310 *this letter to?*
- 311 Dr: *(interpreting) Yes.*
- 312 DE: *(writing) Anger put me in * * hospital?*
- 313 Dr: *In the Child Guidance Clinic in * * .*
- 314 DE: *And where do you want to go from here so he will know*
315 *where you want to go?*
- 316 Dr: *(interpreting) He wants back to his ordinary school.*
- 317 DE: *(writing) Anger put me in...but I want to be a 'good guy'?*
- 318 P: *Yes.*
- 319 DE: *A 'good guy' and return to my ordinary school (writing).*
320 *Why do you want to go back there?*
- 321 Dr: *(interpreting) You see to be here you have the feeling that*
322 *you are nuts!*

- 323 DE: *(writing) Sometimes where I am, I get the feeling I am nuts*
324 *when I'm not! I have been speaking with Dr. Erikson and*
325 *David Epston . . . and we decided that if I put my two sisters,*
326 *one of whom died recently, in my heart and played like you*
327 *do - fake passing, going around anger, or passing off before*
328 *anger attacks . . . tackles me,*
- 329 Dr: *(interpreting) If he comes there, anger, and tried to start*
330 *tackling, and I pass the ball to someone else, that does mean*
331 *that he can't tackle me?*
- 332 DE: *He might get a yellow card (mimicking a referee holding up*
333 *a yellow card). 'Before anger tackles me, I think I can win'.*
- 334 DE: *Can we ask him some questions?*
- 335 Dr: *(interpreting) Yes.*
- 336 DE: *Is it alright, is it okay for me to play like you against anger?*
- 337 Dr: *He just asked me if I could help him to translate it into*
338 *** before we send it.*
- 339 DE: *Yes, why don't you. Do you want to do it now?*
- 340 Dr: *(interpreting) Not now, he says.*
- 341 DE: *What about this? What about asking Tomas? What do you*
342 *think about this one? Ask him if he ever had any problems*
343 *with anger himself when he was younger? And how he got*
344 *around them? Was that a good question to ask him?*
- 345 P: *Yes.*
- 346 DE: *Tomas, did you have problems with anger as a young boy or*
347 *young man, and if so, how did you get around them?*
348 *(writing) What else do you want to ask him, now we are*
349 *speaking to him?*
- 350 P: *His autograph.*
- 351 Dr: *(interpreting) He wants his autograph.*
- 352 DE: *Tomas, what about this . . . if Dr. Erikson writes you a letter in*
353 *one month's time . . . that I have pretty much got round my*
354 *anger . . . would you please get me your autograph?*

- 355 Dr: *We will be on holidays so we will have two months.*
- 356 DE: *That is a good time.*
- 357 Dr: *One month would be very short to learn to play this new*
358 *game*
- 359 DE: *Okay . . . writing) and get around anger, will you give me your*
360 *autograph . . . (to interpreter) Does he [Peter] think that*
361 *if he can do this, do you think that you will deserve to be on*
362 *the * * Anti-Anger Team?*
- 363 Dr: *(interpreting) Yes.*
- 364 DE: *And do you think that you would be willing later on to coach*
365 *other young people whose lives are being destroyed by*
366 *anger?*
- 367 Dr: *(interpreting) Yes.*
- 368 DE: *Can I tell Tomas that?*
- 369 P: *Yes.*
- 370 DE: *(writing) Tomas, I am hoping to join the * * National*
371 *Anti-Anger Team and I will then coach other young boys and*
372 *girls? Will you coach the girls too?*
- 373 P: *Okay.*
- 374 DE: *Other young boys and girls whose lives, whose hearts are*
375 *being destroyed by anger (writing). Is that okay? Do you*
376 *that, do you want to say anything more in your letter? Is*
377 *there a particular goal or game and say that that was good*
378 *. . . cheer him up or something?*
- 379 Dr: *(interpreting) There was a game against Israel and he kicked*
380 *three of the five goals.*
- 381 DE: *Hat trick. What should I say you want to tell him about?*
- 382 Dr: *(interpreting) He wants you to write that he thinks that he*
383 *was real good in the match between * * and Israel when*
384 *he scored three goals.*
- 385 DE: *(writing) You were real good in the match between Israel and*
386 ** * when you scored, uh, call it a hat-trick, three goals.*

- 387 *What is the word when you score three goals?*
- 388 P: *Hat-trick.*
- 389 Dr: *(interpreting) He doesn't know if it really was a hat-trick,*
390 *that probably means the first and the second and the third in*
391 *a row.*
- 392 DE: *No, I think just three in one game.*
- 393 Dr: *(interpreting) Okay, he knows that he made three out of five*
394 *and David said that's the hat-trick.*
- 395 DE: *Can you ask him why, I'm just wondering why it is called a*
396 *'hat-trick'. Does he know?*
- 397 Dr: *(interpreting) I think he's right. But he says it's just because*
398 *it's difficult, and you know (speaking for self) I've got the*
399 *idea that that's what the magic man, they do hat-tricks, that*
400 *was just up in my mind.*
- 401 DE: *Yeah, yeah I was just thinking, what does that mean,*
402 *hat-trick?*
- 403 Dr: *(interpreting) That's not that, to pull rabbits out of hats,*
404 *that's not difficult cause it's not real . . . that's just tricky*
405 *. . . but to have three real goals that's real.*
- 406 DE: *Would you ask Peter that, if it would be alright when this*
407 *happens in the future if it's okay for you two to write me a*
408 *letter and let me know so I can write back? Is that okay?*
- 409 Dr: *(interpreting) Yes.*
- 410 DE: *Oh good, good. Tell him I promise to write back by the fax*
411 *machine.*
- 412 Dr: *(interpreting) Wow! He didn't know how fast the faxes were.*
- 413 DE: *Yeah, yeah, yeah.*
- 414 Dr: *We can almost look at it when you are typewrite it and we*
415 *read it at the same moment.*
- 416 DE: *Well the problem is, the difference in time. Tell him that*
417 *when its ten o'clock pm in * * its seven o'clock in the*
418 *morning the next day in New Zealand.*

- 419 Dr: *I could tell him about the letter I got from you.*
- 420 DE: *It was ahead of time. Well we should stop there and uh, I*
421 *hope, uh I really liked meeting you and uh I've actually seen*
422 *Tomas Winter play last year when he scored two goals in a*
423 *game against Germany I think? He wasn't expected to, I*
424 *think they lost in the end but it was pretty close. Do you know*
425 *when they had the championships here last year?*
- 426 Dr: *I am not in athletics.*
- 427 DE: *(addresses Peter) Do you remember they had the world*
428 *championships here last?*
- 429 Dr: *(interpreting) European.*
- 430 DE: *European, and last year he played, they were playing*
431 *Germany and he scored two goals, remember.*
- 432 Dr: *(interpreting) But they lost.*
- 433 DE: *But they lost, that's right, sad. But * * almost won.*
- 434 Dr: *(interpreting) They are the one in their group now.*
- 435 DE: *Yeah. So I believe, if you have Tomas Winter on your side,*
436 *sisters in your heart, uh I, I bet on you. Okay?*
- 437 Dr: *(interpreting) Just bet . . . (to David) Is it okay that he gets*
438 *this paper (from whiteboard)*
- 439 DE: *Goodluck, goodluck, good game . . . Goodbye Peter . . . Ciao.*

NARRATIVE THERAPY IN PRACTICE

Information Sheet

(Client Version)

What is this study about?

The aim of this study is to gain an indepth understanding of the way language is used in narrative therapy and relate this to how narrative therapists achieve their goals. This research is being done by myself, Patricia Nicholl as a thesis for my MA under the supervision of Professor Andrew Lock in the Psychology Department at Massey University.

What would I have to do?

If you agree to take part in this study, the video recording of the interview between yourself and David Epston will be analysed in detail. Background information relating to the interview may be included in the research report if this acceptable to you. This interview is the only one to be included in this research project. The video recording will be stored safely during this time and no-one other than myself and my supervisor will be allowed to view it. When the study is finished it will be returned to David Epston.

What are my rights?

- You have the right to refuse to take part in the study

If you take part in this study, you have the right to:

- Have any questions that you have about the study answered..
- Have your anonymity protected. Any personal details that might identify you will be changed to ensure this.
- Be given a summary of the findings.

If you are interested in taking part in this study, please let me know. Please contact me through my supervisor on (06) 3569099 if you have any further questions.

Patricia Nicholl

NARRATIVE THERAPY IN PRACTICE

Information Sheet

(Therapist Version)

What is this study about?

The aim of this study is to determine the function of specific language used in narrative therapy and relate this to how narrative therapists achieve their goals. This research is being done by Patricia Nicholl as a thesis for her MA under the supervision of Professor Andrew Lock in the Psychology Department at Massey University.

What would I have to do?

If you agree to take part, the transcript and video recording of the interview between yourself and a twelve year old boy that you have made available will be analysed in detail to determine the function and effect of language used. No other person will have access to the video recording and at the conclusion of the research this will be returned to you. You will also be asked to take part in discussions with the researcher about her interpretations of the data and whether you consider these to be an accurate reflection of what took place in the interview from your point of view. Direct quotes from these discussions may be used in the research, but only with your approval.

What are my rights?

- You have the right to decline to take part in the study

If you take part in this study, you have the right to:

- Ask any questions about the study at any time during participation.
- Refuse to answer any questions.
- Be given a summary of the findings.

If you are interested in taking part in this study, please let me know. Please contact me through my supervisor on (06) 3569099 if you have any further questions.

Patricia Nicholl

NARRATIVE THERAPY IN PRACTICE

Consent Form

(Client Version)

I have read the information sheet for this study and have had the details explained to me. My questions about the research have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree to the use of the video recording on the understanding that my anonymity will be protected and that it will only be used for :

- this research
- journal publications that may result from this
(delete as required)

I agree to background information being included in the research report on the condition that personal details are changed to protect my anonymity.

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

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

NARRATIVE THERAPY IN PRACTICE

Consent Form

(Therapist Version)

I have read the information sheet for this study and have had the details explained to me. My questions about the research have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time. I also understand that I have the right to refuse to answer any particular questions.

- I agree to the researcher using the videotape and transcript of the interview between myself and a 12-yr-old boy for her thesis project.
- I also agree to provide information to the researcher on the understanding that it will be used for this research.
- I agree to my name being used in this research.
- I agree to discuss with the researcher interpretations she has made about what has occurred in the interview process. Direct quotations from these discussions may be used in this research on the condition that their use is acceptable to me.
- I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____