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You and Me and Shame

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
of
Master of Counselling
at
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THE UNIVERSITY OF
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Abstract

This research project investigated the effects of bringing an as-yet-untold story of shame to a narrative therapy counselling conversation. The researcher, who became the client, invited a narrative practitioner to join her in three conversations, a counselling conversation and two interpersonal process recall conversations. The data generated from these conversations as well as the personal research diary kept by the researcher are woven together as research findings, presenting a layered, journeyed account of the movement experienced by the researcher.

This study noticed the challenges of recognising and speaking stories of shame. Attention is given to noticing vulnerability and the difficulty of speaking stories of shame and also to the role of witnessing in the relationship between the counsellor and the client meeting within a context of shame.

This autoethnographic account offers itself as practitioner research. Knowledges produced in this research highlight the importance of considering first the role of shame in the life of a problem and second how it is to be positioned as a client in a counselling relationship.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: You and me and shame

In order to begin I need to take you back. Back to before I began this journey of learning about shame. Before engaging in this research project I carried a distant understanding of shame. I say 'distant' because although I thought about shame I mostly thought about how it affected other people, people who had perhaps experienced sexual abuse, mental unwellness, or domestic violence. This distant, narrow view of shame prevented me from recognising my own relationship with shame and it prevented me from noticing, or asking questions in counselling about others' relationships with shame.

I knew that I had experienced shame in my life as I carried a story from my childhood that in a small way fitted with my narrow description of where I thought shame would reside. The events of this story fell outside of what I thought was normal for a child to experience and I had kept quiet about this story, distancing myself from it in an effort to reduce shame. I thought this distancing was doing an adequate job of keeping shame away from my life as although I thought about this story I didn't think that it or shame were having an effect on my life. Thinking this, that shame was a bigger problem for other people than it was for me, I decided it would be ok for me to study shame. I thought that I could use my experience of shame as a reference and that this would not be too difficult, as I had 'moved on' from that experience.

I did not have an experience-near understanding (White, 2007) of what I now recognise as shame. I did not recognise shame and therefore I was unable to see

how shame, not just the shame from my childhood but also other shame, was affecting me. This thesis is the story of how I came to a more experience-near understanding of shame.

Why shame?

Late in 2015 I learnt about a number of women who were speaking out about abuse they had been subjected to by the actor Bill Cosby. This information came as a shock to me as I had grown up watching and laughing to his TV show “The Cosby Show” (1984 - 1992). The scale of his offending became clear when a magazine cover featured a picture of all the women who had spoken up about their experience of mistreatment by Cosby. When I saw this picture I began to wonder about the impact of one person’s decision to speak about abuse on another's decision to tell their own story.

This sparked my curiosity about shame. I began to wonder about the social construction of abuse narratives and about the ripple effect of witnessing people speak stories of shame. I began to consider the role that shame plays in the life of a person who has experienced sexual abuse. I thought about the silence and disconnection that shame brings, and wondered whether witnessing a person speak about their experience of abuse and the shame that was a consequence of it, might act as a catalyst for other people to decide to speak about their own experiences of abuse and shame. I wondered about the implications of shame for counselling conversations. I was curious about the ways in which shame might prevent people from seeking counselling, or might perhaps prevent a person from being able to speak their stories within a counselling conversation.

I began talking to my mother about these ideas I was having. My mother has worked as a counsellor for 20 years and for much of this time her focus has been on counselling people who have experienced sexual abuse. Her depth of experience in this field is a source of inspiration and a well of knowledge for me. Together we began talking about shame and how it impacts on a person who has been abused.

As I began to think more about shame, the distant understanding of shame that I had carried began to shift. I came upon a Ted talk titled “The power of vulnerability”¹ by Brené Brown. In this talk Brown speaks candidly about her own journey into researching shame. Brown did not set out to research shame as her initial research curiosity was connection. However she soon came to realise that

When you ask people about love, they tell you about heartbreak. When you ask people about belonging, they'll tell you their most excruciating experiences of being excluded. And when you ask people about connection, the stories they told me were about disconnection. (Brown, 2010, 3:54)

This realisation caused Brown (2010) to pause the research; “I ran into this unnamed thing that absolutely unravelled connection in a way that I didn't understand or had never seen” (4:18), what she discovered was that this ‘thing’ is shame. “Shame is really easily understood as the fear of disconnection: Is there something about me that, if other people know it or see it, that I won't be worthy of connection?” (4:40).

¹ Brown, B. (2010, June). *Brené Brown: The power of vulnerability* [video file].

Retrieved from https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability

This new definition of shame resonated with me. I recognised myself in this description of shame and began to wonder about my own relationship with shame.

Bringing my own story to the research

I became interested in how I might come to a closer understanding of shame. I thought about other occasions when my learning had been significantly influenced through the practice of reflective and reflexive witnessing of myself (Weingarten, 2003). And this led me to think that I could learn about shame by speaking about my own experience of it. I decided I would bring my childhood story of shame out of its box and speak about it to a counsellor. I considered that seeking counselling for this story would be an ethical place to start this research. I wanted to be willing to experience telling a story of shame to a counsellor before asking another to do this same; to know what it is I am inviting another to do. From this point I began documenting this journey, keeping notes of my thoughts, tracking movement, mapping the migration from a distant to an experience- near understanding of shame.

Locating this research

This research is designed to be offered back to the professional practice of counselling. In the early stages of this project the research curiosity was focused on therapy for people who had experienced sexual abuse. I initially outlined my research curiosity as:

1. What is the significance of shame in sexual abuse counselling?
2. The following sub questions will further guide this study:

- a. What are the factors that support women to move beyond the silencing effects of shame into a position where speaking about sexual abuse is possible?
- b. What are the limits of helpfulness of speaking and not speaking about sexual abuse?
- c. What factors are important when considering the range of possibilities for speaking about events which have brought or continue to bring shame?
- d. What knowledges about shame and which practice skills, specifically focused on narrative therapy, will be useful for counselling women who have experienced sexual abuse?
- e. As I compassionately witness myself speaking about shame what influence does this have on how I practice as a narrative counsellor, and in particular in responding to shame?

These questions guided the initial phases of this research. What came to the fore as this research progressed was a much closer, more refined curiosity. The questions shaping this curiosity were:

- In which ways does the presence of a story of shame influence the performance of my identity?
- What are the effects of a counselling conversation, both the idea of the conversation and the actual conversation itself, have on my relationship with shame?
- What is the effect of a story of shame on the counsellor?

- If a person coming to counselling does not themselves use the word shame, are there moments when it might be helpful for the counsellor to weave into the conversation a curiosity about shame?

These research curiosities required me to stand in three different locations at the same time, at the intersections between counselling, research and the people and stories that come to counselling. In this location I thought not only about stories of shame and problems, but also about stories of counselling and of research. I became curious about the discourses of counselling and how these shape what is spoken in counselling; the effect of the idea of counselling. I began to wonder about the expectations and hopes and the disappointments and difficulties that people experience as they engage in counselling. I also wondered about the experiences of the counsellor when stories of shame are brought to counselling, how do these stories invite the counsellor to respond? Lastly I asked myself what responsibilities do I hold as a researcher? What story do I want this research to tell?

These questions led me to refine my research curiosity further still to settle on the following: what happens at the intersection of shame and narrative therapy?

An outline of the chapters

Chapter one offers a brief account of the curiosities that lead to this research.

Chapter two traces the lines of knowledge and thought that have been folded into my life and that make this research possible. This chapter locates me as a counsellor and researcher, as well as this work as practitioner based research. Chapter three is a review of the literature that supports this research project. Chapter four outlines the research methods. Chapter five is the first of the chapters that contains the noticings

of this research project. This chapter is called witnessing myself and explores my experience of noticing shame in my own life. Chapter six, titled speaking, considers the role of speaking in coming to understand shame. Chapter seven, titled movement, tells the stories of transport that have occurred throughout this project. Chapter eight is the discussion chapter. Here I document the ways in which this research project has stitched me into new knowledge and how this new knowledge will be woven into the performance of my identity as a counsellor.

CHAPTER TWO

Tracing lines of thought: A whakapapa of theories and knowledge

An individual emerges through the processes of social interaction, not as a relatively fixed end product but as one who is constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate. Accordingly, who one is, that is, what sort of person one is, is always an open ended question with a shifting answer depending upon the positions made available within one's own and others' discursive practices and within those practices, the stories within which we make sense of our own and others' lives. (Davies & Harré, 1999, p. 35)

This chapter explores the knowledges and theories that are influential in my life as a narrative counsellor and that have shaped this research project. I think about this as tracing lines of thought and knowledge, lines that begin outside of me and have come to be part of me. There are two metaphors that I use to consider these lines. The first metaphor is whakapapa from the Maori oral tradition of storying genealogy. Translated as "to place in layers, lay one upon another" (Māori.com) whakapapa is also seen as "a basis for the organisation of knowledge in the respect of the creation and development of all things" (Barlow, 1991, p 173). The metaphor of whakapapa resonates for me because it encourages recognition of the rich history of people and ideas that have come before me. A recognition of the ways in which knowledge has become available to me, the ways it has been layered into my lived experience, making possible a journey towards preferred identities in counselling and research.

The second metaphor emerges from Deleuze's (1993) idea of the fold. Winslade (2009) writes

For Deleuze, it is from the outside that our subjective experience is created. As experiences are reflected upon, brought into conversation, unfolded and folded back on themselves, or folded into a project of subjectivation, personal depth and richness of variation is constructed. (p. 341)

Employing the fold as a metaphor also helps to capture my understanding of how certain knowledges have become available to me. I recognise that through conversation and reflection and conversation again, layers and layers of knowledge and meaning fold like ribbons into my life.

The image I have as I write about the fold is of me as a little girl. It's Saturday night and I am sitting at my mother's feet. We are in the lounge at the farm in Te Waotu and she is putting rags into my hair so that it will be curly for church on Sunday. The process of rags involves many strips of long cotton cloth — this time made from an old bed sheet — being wound into my hair. My mother takes the cloth and lays it against a section of hair, she twists my hair around the cloth and then proceeds to tightly wind the cloth back over my hair tying it off when she gets to the top. This process of twisting and winding is repeated until my head is fully covered with white cotton 'dreadlocks'. In the morning, after a slightly uncomfortable sleep, the strips of cotton are unwound and my hair bounces with beautiful curls.

The connection between this memory and the idea of the fold is in the way in which the hair and the cloth are wound together, the hair that was outside the cloth is folded in, and the cloth is folded both inside and outside of the hair. What was out

becomes in through the process of folding. So it is with knowledge, what was out, has now come to be in through the process of it being folded into my life.

The metaphors of whakapapa and the fold offer a position from which I venture to speak about knowledge that makes this work possible. I acknowledge the dialogic nature of knowledge, “the layering of meaning upon meaning, voice upon voice, strengthening through merging (but not identification), the combination of many voices (a corridor of voices) that augments understanding” (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 121). Further, as I speak I do so as a site of knowledge, reproducing, “reappropriating and reaccenting” (Lysack, 2006, p. 94) these layers of discourse that have been folded into my life. Winslade (2009) writes about Deleuze’s belief that “the subject, the person who comes to know something does not “have” a point of view but “is” a point of view” (p. 334) and that “this is a view of a person as grounded in conditions that are relative to the cultural and historical positions in which they find themselves” (p. 334). As I speak I am reproducing discourse from the many positions I inhabit including woman, mother, wife, counsellor, researcher, writer, friend.

In this thesis I reproduce knowledge that is folded into and out of my life, the theories, practices, and metaphors that shape the performance of my identity as a counsellor, and as a researcher.

Applying a narrative and social constructionist metaphor

Having drawn on two metaphors to describe my understanding of how knowledge becomes available to me, I now draw on two other metaphors to describe my location as a counsellor. Guided by Freedman and Combs (1996) I describe these

metaphors as “narrative” and “social construction” (p. 1). The narrative metaphor draws on the idea that our lives are storied (White, 1995); that “we seek to make sense of our lives and experiences by ascribing meaning through stories which themselves arise within social conversations and culturally available discourses” (Brown & Augusta-Scott, 2007, p. ix). White (1991), referencing Bruner, suggests “stories are composed of dual landscapes — a “landscape of action” and “a landscape of consciousness” (p. 123). The landscape of action is made up of the events that happen in our lives, and the landscape of consciousness “features the meanings derived by the characters and readers through “reflection” on the events and plots as they unfold in the landscape of action” (p. 124). As a narrative therapist, I am interested in the meaning people make from the events of their lives. Meaning that is governed by the cultural and historical discourses of their life.

The social construction metaphor:

A social constructionist approach is one that seeks to understand the way a person’s life is constituted by exploring the contextual specificities of a person’s lived experience. Social constructionism “leads us to consider the ways in which every person’s social, interpersonal reality has been constructed through interaction with other human beings and human institutions and to focus on the influence of social realities on the meaning of people’s lives” (Freedman & Combs, 1996, p. 1).

Hoffman (1992) writes that “the social construction theorists see ideas, concepts and memories arising from social interchange and mediated through language. All knowledge, the social constructionist holds, evolves in the space between people” (p. 8). Layers of discourse govern this sense-making and discourse is reproduced as

meaning is made. Meaning is attached to the stories we carry and influences the performance of these stories, influencing the way we tell ourselves to others.

Discourse

I have said that layers of discourse influence meaning-making. “For Foucault “discourse” refers to ways of thinking and speaking about aspects of reality” (Cheek, 2000, p. 22). Discourse governs thinking, speaking and meaning-making processes, and yet we are mostly unaware of discourse. Cheek (2000) writes that “a discourse consists of a set of common assumptions which, although they may be so taken for granted as to be invisible, provide the basis for conscious knowledge” (p. 23). In this way, although we may not be aware of discourse, it shapes our lives. A helpful metaphor is given by Davies (1993) who likens discourse to a pane of glass, “just as we disattend the pane of glass in order to look at the view outside the window, so we generally disattend discourse. (It is not until the glass fractures or breaks, for example, that we focus differently)” (p. 153). As a narrative therapist I attune my ears and eyes to the presence of discourse in order to render the invisible visible. I seek to notice discourse with the intention of collaboratively discovering the ways in which a person has been constituted by discourse. Cheek (2000) writes that

discourses create discursive frameworks which order reality in a certain way. They both enable and constrain the production of knowledge in that they allow for certain ways of thinking about reality whilst excluding others. In this way they determine who can speak, when, and with what authority, and conversely, who can not (p. 23)

This governance of speaking is not overt, rather it often happens without people being aware at all, Lowe (1999) — referencing his own earlier doctoral study — explains that discourse in the Foucauldian tradition pertains to “systematic and institutionalised ways of speaking/writing which form the objects of which they speak, *and* conceal their role in doing so” (p.79). This concealment takes the form of taken-for-granted assumptions. Much of the meaning we make of events is based on these assumptions. “Discourse should, therefore, *not* be considered as a simple translation between reality and language but as *practices* that shape perceptions of reality” (Markula & Pringle, 2006, p. 31). We are never free of discourse as it forms the very fabric of our thinking. What we can hope for is to notice discourse and the effect it has on the meaning we make of events. A story illustrates.

During my first year in the MCouns programme I was tasked with producing a presentation that would reflect on a discourse that had shaped my life. The discourse I chose to examine was ‘best friends’. Investigating this discourse was akin to engaging in an externalising conversation. I placed the problem of best friend outside of myself and began to objectify the ideas I was carrying about it. I began to notice some of the taken-for-granted assumptions I had about the idea of best friends. These assumptions were that everybody has to have a best friend and that a best friendship would be an exclusive friendship governed by certain rules and privileges. I noticed that I was called to a position that was outside of these discursive suggestions. I did not recognise myself as fitting with these discursive “truths”. I determined that I had failed in the realm of best friendship-ness and this caused me to doubt my abilities as a friend in general and as a woman.

Glimpsing parts of the discourse of best friend made it possible for me to notice cracks in the pane of glass of this discourse. Davies (1993) wrote of recognising ourselves as discourse plays out:

Precisely because discourse is understood as transparent, then, any text that mobilises that discourse is taken to describe a real and *recognisable* world.

One understands oneself, in reading, to be *re-cognising* that which the author of the text cognised. (p. 153)

The discourse of best friend was layered into my life by the texts that mobilised the discourse. Books such as 'Sweet Valley High' and television programmes like 'Melrose Place' and 'Friends' reproduced normative discursive assumptions about friendship. I read these texts to be truth. I did not recognise myself as fitting within the truth that the discourse was presenting and was therefore hailed by the discourse to take up the position of 'other'. The word hailed is borrowed from Parker (1992) who writes that "a discourse makes available a space for particular types of self to step in. It addresses us in a particular way. The discourse is hailing us, shouting 'hey you there' and making us listen as a certain type of person" (p. 7). I listened as a person who did not fit with the norms produced by dominant discourses. Listening in this way influenced how I performed my identity as a friend, it had an effect on how I spoke about myself as a friend, and how I included friends in my life. It influenced how I spoke my ideas to other people, especially other women, and it had an effect on how I negotiated my relationships.

Positioning Theory

Positioning theory argues that people take up positions in relation to discourse in the very moment of making an utterance in a conversation (including, of course, counselling conversations). Each utterance must necessarily be situated in discourse simply because it uses discursive material (words and meanings) in order to make sense. (Winslade, 2005, p. 352)

Applying the idea of positioning to my experience of the best friend discourse I recognise that the story I carried about my friendship abilities did not make it possible for me to identify myself as a best friend. Being called to take up the position 'other', or 'not best friend material' I used deficit language to describe myself as a friend. From this deficit position I continued to experience struggle and disappointment in my friendship relationships. I accepted the assumptions I had made about friendships, I could not see the constitutive effects of the discourse.

In order to understand positioning theory, thought needs to be given to the workings of power within relationships. White (2002) addresses modern power in his work on personal failure. Drawing from the work of Foucault, White writes of modern power as "a power that recruits people's active participation in the fashioning of their own lives, their relationships, and their identities, according to the constructed norms of culture — we are both a consequence of this power, and a vehicle for it" (p. 36).

I was recruited to take up the position of 'not best friend material' by the power inherent in discourse. Jackson and Mazzei (2012) quote Foucault, saying

Foucault showed that power's existence is local, capillary, and reaches "into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their

actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives... *within* the social body rather than *from above* it.” (p. 50)

This was the way I experienced power enacting itself upon me as I considered my identity as friend. I was the problem. Engaging in the discourse assignment invited me to begin to deconstruct this problem-saturated story; to take notice of the taken-for-granted assumptions I was making about the nature of ‘friend’.

Deconstruction

The term deconstruction was introduced by the French philosopher Derrida.

Deconstruction has to do with procedures that subvert taken-for-granted realities and practices; those so-called “truths” that are split off from the conditions and the context of their production, those disembodied ways of speaking that hide their biases and prejudices, and those familiar practices of self and of relationship that are subjugating of persons’ lives. (White, 1991, p. 121)

Deconstruction of the discourses of ‘best friend’ began by noticing the discourse. It continued as I asked questions about the truth claims of the normative discursive assumptions that I carried about best friendship. Besley (2001) further describes how deconstruction is woven into narrative therapy

Jacques Derrida’s (1982) notion of ‘deconstruction’ is harnessed to externalise the dominant ‘problem-saturated’ descriptions or stories of a person’s life, to listen for spaces, gaps, hidden meanings or conflicting stories and to explore or map the influence that problems have in a person’s life. (p. 75)

Here Besley brings forward the ideas of externalising conversations (White, 2007) and mapping the influence of a problem. In narrative therapy these steps are conceived of and made possible through deconstruction. White (1991) writes about Bourdieu's idea of "exoticizing the domestic" (p. 121) by making the familiar strange.

Externalising conversation

White (1991) offers that making the familiar strange can be done by objectifying a problem through engaging in externalising conversation; "These externalising conversations assist persons to unravel, across time, the constitution of their self and of their relationships" (p. 126). Built on understandings of discourse, positioning, and deconstruction, externalising rests on the belief that the problem is not the person, that the problem is itself the problem. Through active, purposeful, careful use of language a person is invited to speak in an objectified way about the problems affecting them. White and Epston (1990) write that "the externalisation of the problem helps persons identify and separate from the unitary knowledges and "truth" discourses that are subjugating of them" (p. 30).

The hope is that as a person is invited to speak about the problems in their life in an externalised way they will experience themselves as being differently positioned in relation to the problem. Gremillion (2003) says

The point of engaging in "externalizing conversations" with clients is to create a discursive space to name, unpack and detail the relational and ideational contexts of problems so that clients can imagine and experience a sense of active agency, rather than passengerhood or inevitability, in connection to these problems. (p. 201)

This languaging that separates the problem from the person offers space and opportunity for the influence and effects of a problem to be mapped. Such mapping invites the person to consider their relationship to the problem and from this position a person might then take a stand against the problem's influence on their lives. "The problem ceases to represent the "truth" about people's identities, and options for successful problem resolution suddenly become visible and accessible" (White, 2007, p.9).

I will continue with my story of the discourse assignment to illustrate this idea.

As a class we travelled to Maniaroa Marae on the rugged west coast of New Zealand. We were there to immerse ourselves in Maori culture and knowledge and during this noho we would each present our assignments. When my time came I spoke bravely; I showed photos of my friends, telling stories of confusion and longing. I named the position calls of 'bad friend' and 'not best friend material' and spoke about questioning these. I laid bare my basic deconstructive thinking about the discourses of 'friends' and 'best friends'.

I spoke about searching for other stories about my friendship abilities, stories that were different to the problem saturated story. I spoke about how these alternative stories (White, 2007) made it possible for me to begin to change the story I was carrying about my abilities as a friend. I spoke about my preferences for friendships, the story I would like to tell about myself as a friend. I spoke about recognising, counteracting, modifying and refusing positions within a discourse (Davies, 1991). Momentously what occurred through the process of preparing and telling this story, and through the

witnessing that followed, was a shifting of my position within the discourse of friendship.

I did not have a way to name this experience at the time, but now I see it as a line of flight '*ligne de fuite*' (Deleuze, 1980). Massumi (1987) notes that in French "*Fuite* covers not only the act of fleeing or eluding but also flowing, leaking, and disappearing into the distance" (p. xvi). I wish to add to this list seeping and wisping. These descriptions fit my experience of what it felt like (and still feels like) to attempt to deconstruct friendship discourses: It felt like I had found a crack in the wall of the friendship discourse and was squeezing myself through it, hoping to reach a preferred position within this discourse.

Witnessing

Being witnessed as I told my story at Maniaroa had a profound effect on me. I continue my story:

Following the telling of each presentation there was a definitional ceremony (White, 2007) during which Kathie responded to the speaker with a rescued speech poem. A rescued speech poem is a poem that is built entirely from the words of the other person. Behan (2003) elaborates:

In my work with the people who consult me I am always pursuing poetic language. I will write down on the notepad at my knee the words and phrases that bring forward brilliant images from the person's life and imagination, or depict colourful longings and dreams, or speak to extraordinary movement in some way. Johnella Bird (2000) calls this

“talk that sings.” Lynn Hoffman (2002) calls it “painted language.” I call it poetic speech (p. 1)

Kathie witnessed my story, allowing my words to resonate with her, she then curated them and spoke them back to me. Having my words captured and spoken into a poem was a validating experience for me. It allowed me to fold my own knowledge back into my life which moved me towards courage, bravery and worth.

The meaning I made from this experience was that witnessing was made possible through vulnerability. Weingarten (2003) writes that “the knowledge that some people are willing to bear witness reactivates the capacity to witness oneself” (p. 152). This experience of being witnessed encouraged me to grow my own practices of embracing vulnerability and of witnessing, with others and with myself. Practicing witnessing myself with compassion (Neff, 2011; Weingarten, 2003) has been a necessary and welcome companion throughout this journey of research, nurturing a posture of gentleness which makes it possible for me to embrace vulnerability in order to explore and tell difficult stories.

Feminism

I now explore how feminism influences narrative therapy and is relevant to researching shame. Narrative therapy emerged at a time when the world of therapy was being influenced by feminism. “Narrative ideas from their conception were explicitly pro-feminist” (Russell & Carey, 2003, p. 72). Feminism questioned assumptions about gender and identity both in everyday life and in therapy. “The phrase, ‘the personal is the political’ represents one of feminism’s key theoretical contributions. This phrase represents a commitment to understand people’s personal

experiences as influenced by broader relations of power” (Russell & Carey, 2003, p. 71).

I bring feminism to shame through the vehicle of narrative therapy so as to consider the wider contextual landscapes of discourse and power that shame inhabits.

A feminist narrative strategy implies a positioned stance, as feminism does not claim to be neutral, but rather explicitly interested in disrupting the construction, performance, and internalized devaluation of gendered subjectivities within patriarchal social relations (Brown, 2007a, p. 271).

Women, as gendered subjects, are more greatly affected by the capillary nature of modern power. Because our society is patriarchal, male ideas and ways of being are privileged. This hierarchy of privilege is powered by dominant discourses and calls men into positions of power more readily than it calls women. Through patriarchal power women become subject to abuse and injustice. Further, women are effectively silenced by an absence of positions that offer speaking rights. The local knowledge that women carry may be disqualified thus considered less valid than men's (White, 2001). Gender is “relevant to the therapeutic endeavour” (Russell & Carey, 2003, p. 71), and to the study of shame.

Whakamaa

Also relevant to this study is its specific cultural location in New Zealand. From Māori language we have the word Whakamaa.

Whakamaa always involves an implicit if not explicit comparison with other people in which the person who is *whakamaa* is bound up with the lack or loss of mana in relation to others (Metge, 1986, pp. 31-32).

In an attempt to conceive of this in poststructural narrative terms I think of whakamaa in relation to positioning, when comparison forces a person into positions where there is a loss of mana, a poor fit with the persons own preferences.

Folding whakamaa broadens my options for thinking about shame. Whakamaa reaches further than shame to touch aspects of lived experience that many might not call shame, feelings of oddness, or left-outness, or feeling of not knowing what to say, feelings of being pushed into the light, of unwanted attention and of awkwardness. This study has attempted to notice these aspects of whakamaa alongside the more well recognised shame stories.

CHAPTER THREE

Reviewing the literature

I identify two waves of writing that seek to classify and understand shame. Governed primarily but not exclusively by the time during which the work was being produced, these waves fall loosely into structuralist and poststructuralist categories. This chapter explores the work of these two waves and discusses the relevance to this research. Specific emphasis will be on Narrative therapy works that focus on shame and sexual abuse.

The first wave

In the 1970's a first wave of dedicated shame literature emerged. Populated by writers located within and writing for the psy-professions the language of the first wave literature is influenced by structuralist medical modes of thought. Interested in the psychopathology of shame, the focus was on classifying shame (Lewis, 1971; Kaufman, 1989, 1992; Tangney, 1995), distinguishing between shame and guilt (Lewis, 1971; Kaufman, 1989, 1992; Tangney, 1995; Parker & Thomas, 2009), and proposing therapeutic remedies for shame (Lewis, 1971; Kaufman, 1989, 1992; Bradshaw, 1988).

Influential in the rise of this wave of shame literature is the work of Helen Block Lewis (1971). Recognised as being a leading voice into what was a void, Lewis sought to emphasise the role of shame in the problems people brought to therapy. Through extensive research using data collected from therapy conversations Lewis addressed the difference between shame and guilt. "Lewis acknowledged how shame and guilt were often inextricably bound up with each other, yet she believed

that they were phenomenologically different feelings and feeling states” (Zarem, 2006, p. 5).

Preceding Lewis, but not specifically focused on shame is the work of Erik Erickson, (for example 1965) who focused on developmental stages. Significantly this work differed from other works in the psy field of the day in that it invited the reader to consider development from the view of the child; this invitation to understanding the experience of the child gave energy to curiosity about how these childhood experiences might inform and shape adult life. Erikson proposed eight stages of childhood. Each stage presented as a polarised milestone. Most relevant to this study is the second stage ‘Will: Autonomy vs shame and doubt’ (Erikson, 1965), although later writers have proposed that all eight stages have the possibility of inviting shame; “the negative pole of each crisis is actually an elaboration of shame...a reworking of shame” (Kaufman, 1989, p. 10).

In first wave literature as a whole there are four notable themes that emerge. The first theme is the desire to recognise shame as having effects in the body. Sylvian Tompkins (1962) proposed affect theory, suggesting that positive and negative affects can be described by facial and body responses. Shame is said to be recognised by an eyes down, head lowered and averted, blushing response. This theory was strongly supported by Gershen Kaufman (1989) who integrated it into his own work on shame. Others however were not so sure about the efficacy of attempting to recognise shame in this way. Zarem (2006) notes that while Lewis agreed there might be “visible signs of shame - gaze aversion, blushing, etc... the person does not label the feeling as specifically shame. Instead, the person talks about feeling “weird,” “worthless,” or hating themselves” (p.6). Where affect theory

intersects with this research is in a curiosity about how the word shame is used by people. My curiosity is if, for instance, a person displays what Tompkins would identify as shame responses, would they themselves describe the experience as shame, or is shame not an available word, or not the word that best describes the experience. If a person does not identify this experience as shame is that because shame is not available as a word, would it be useful if it was?

The second theme is silence. Writers noted the silencing effects of shame: “Shame experiences usually begin with sudden self-consciousness, evolve into painful scrutiny of oneself, and culminate in deep inner feelings of torment which generally remain private and uncommunicable” (Kaufman, 1974, p. 570). A participant in a study designed to discover the constructions of survival and coping in women who had experienced sexual abuse explained that ““the feelings are in the words”; thus, one strategy for not feeling was not to talk” (Morrow & Smith, 1995, p. 29). Further to this other writer describe how shame causes people to feel exposed. Tangney (2015) says that “although shame does not necessarily involve an actual observing audience, there is often the imagery of how one’s defective self would appear to others. Not surprisingly, shame often leads to a desire to escape or hide -- to sink into the floor and disappear” (p. 476).

The third theme is an interest in shame and identity formation. Kaufman (1974) proposed that “the experience of shame is inseparable from mans search for himself” (p. 568) and that “the basic way in which shame is generated involves one significant person breaking the interpersonal bridge with another” (p. 570). This thinking led to a premise that a therapist's role is to restore the interpersonal bridge

by approaching shame rather than avoiding it (Kaufman, 1974). I note that the decision to approach shame as a topic of therapy is most often made by the therapist and this further adds to the curiosity explored above: If literature suggests that it is important to talk about shame, but also recognises that shame by its nature is elusive and silent, how does therapy respond?

The fourth notable theme is a desire to correlate shame with problems that people were bringing to therapy. Shame was identified as an affect of and a contributor to many problems. Depression, obsessions, neurosis and narcissism (Lewis, 1971), along with addictive, abusing and eating disorders (Kaufman, 1989), were all attributed to shame. Furthermore, people were said to then experience shame as a result of these problems being present in their lives. This cycle of shame came to be termed a shame spiral (Kaufman, 1992) and it was noted that this shame spiral was sometimes exacerbated by people's interaction with therapy. Psychologists were encouraged to address the "unanalyzed shame" (Lewis, 1971) within a person's life and within the relationship between the therapist and the client.

During this wave of psy-oriented writing an alternative voice emerged, written for those outside the psy-professions, Bradshaw (1988) produced a 'self-help' book for shame. Exploring what Bradshaw calls 'toxic shame', he differentiates toxic shame from healthy shame. "*Healthy shame is the basic metaphysical boundary for human beings*" (p.4, italics in original). Toxic shame he describes as "the all pervasive sense that I am flawed and defective as a human being" (p. 10). Bradshaw explores many different problems for which he attributes toxic shame as the root cause and offers solutions for recognising and reducing toxic shame.

Towards the end of the 20th century the works of Judith Herman (1994) and John Briere (1996) emerged as important in the field of therapy for sexual abuse. These works are less specifically focused on shame but remain important for expanding understanding of the impact of trauma on a person's life.

Argued on structuralist terms, shame, in this first wave literature, is located within the boundaries of the person, an approach that continues with the arrival of poststructuralism. First wave literature offers this study thoughtful descriptions of shame, investigations into correlations between shame and other problems, and insights into the power structures of the client therapist relationship. This research moves beyond the first wave literature in its attention to poststructuralist and social constructionist ideas about discourse and language.

The second wave

Second wave literature, flowing from the momentum and energy of the first wave, folds into itself and reproduces much of the first waves ideas about shame. Second wave writers continue the efforts to classify and define shame (Brown, 2006, 2007; Feiring & Taska, 2005; Dayal, Weaver & Domene, 2015; Adams, 2008) and to distinguish between shame and guilt (Brown, 2006, 2007; Feiring & Taska, 2005; McConnell, 2015). Noticeably the language used to describe shame emerges in the literature as more experience-near (White, 2007). Shame is now being described as “an intensely painful feeling or experience of believing we are flawed and therefore unworthy of acceptance and belonging” (Brown, 2006, p. 45). Zarem (2006) describes shame as

a “ferocious attack on the self,” that occurs in response to rejection, failure and defeat, where the self is experienced as helpless — if not momentarily obliterated. A two-person emotion, shame is the experience of losing self-esteem in one’s own and the others’ eyes. Shame makes us want to hide, disappear, crawl into a hole. (p. 5)

Second wave writers are interested in the dynamics between shame and therapy with many acknowledging that therapy can be, in itself, a shaming experience (Benjamin & Zook-Stanley, 2012; Brown, 2006; Tangney & Dearing, 2002; Hunter, 2011; Thorburn, 2015; Dayal, Weaver & Domene, 2015). For some the idea of therapy as something that is accessed by those who are broken or damaged contributes to an increase in the intensity of the shame they are already experiencing and this idea becomes a barrier to accessing therapeutic help.

Second wave writers agree that shame is still a subject that is not often talked about (Brown, 2006, 2007; Feiring & Taska, 2005) both in and outside therapeutic conversation. Illustrating this is the following insight gathered from grounded theory study designed to measure shame resilience in women:

Shame often produces overwhelming and painful feelings of confusion, fear, anger, judgement, and/or the need to hide. It is difficult to identify shame as the core issue when trying to manage these intense feelings. Even when the participants were able to identify shame, the silencing and secret nature of shame made it very difficult to identify and act on the choices that would facilitate change. (Brown, 2006, p. 46)

There is a recognition among second wave writers that shame is not a word that is being readily used to describe what the writers define as shame. However, the recognition remains that shame contributes to many of the problems people bring to therapy conversations. Brown (2006) recognised that for women there were certain areas where shame was more likely to occur. She termed these “shame triggers” (p. 46). The categories listed by Brown are “appearance and body image, sexuality, family, motherhood, parenting, professional identity and work, mental and physical health, aging, religion, speaking out, and surviving trauma. What makes women vulnerable to shame in these areas are the “unwanted identities” associated with each of these topics” (p. 46). Dayal, Weaver & Domene (2015) recognise eating issues as an area where people are vulnerable to shame, and many writers specifically focus on the relationship between sexual abuse and shame (Adams, 2008; Baird, 1996; Benjamin & Zook-Stanley, 2012; Feiring & Taska, 2005; Joy, 1999; McPhie & Chaffey, 1998; Thorburn, 2015). A longitudinal study that focused on the persistence of shame following sexual abuse (Feiring & Taska, 2005) discovered that participants who reported high levels of shame at the point of abuse disclosure were more likely to experience high levels of shame six years later, whereas participants who reported low levels of shame at the time of disclosure were unlikely to report high levels of shame six years later. This study also concluded that high levels of shame resulting from trauma was likely to indicate higher levels of shame-proneness in other non-traumatic events.

Resilience to shame emerges as a field of interest within the second wave. In 2006 Brown released the findings of her study into shame resilience and proposed shame resilience theory (SRT). It was not until 2010 however — when Brown gave a TEDx

talk titled 'the power of vulnerability' — that interest in shame and shame resilience permeated beyond the walls of the helping professions. Shame, while still being associated with problems and identity, was now also being thought of in terms of connection (Brown, 2006, 2007; Dayal, Weaver & Domene, 2015; McPhie & Chaffey, 1998). Shame was beginning to be described as a “relationally-conscious” emotion (Hartling, Rosen, Walker, & Jordan 2000 as cited in Brown, 2006) and emphasis on the cultural and contextual nature of shame began to be explored (Adams, 2008; Brown, 2006, 2007; Dayal, Weaver & Domene, 2015; Thorburn, 2015; Joy, 1999). Further to this, thought was now being given to how shame, and specifically shame related to sexual abuse, is socially constructed (Baird, 1996; Kamsler, 1990).

Narrative therapy

During this time of emergent poststructuralist thinking and writing, narrative therapy entered the scene as a therapeutic approach that seeks to privilege people's stories, their voices and their lived experience. It is an approach that seeks to separate people from the problems they are experiencing, to position people as the experts in their own lives.

Narrative therapy literature speaks a different language to much of the other literature about shame. Shaped by narrative theories orientation towards poststructuralist (Butler, 2001; Besley, 2002; Hare-Mustin, 1994; Parker, 1999; Sinclair & Monk, 2005), social constructionist (Burr, 2003; Freedman & Combs, 1996; McLeod, 1999; McNamee & Gergen, 1992) and feminist theories (Butler, 2011; Russell & Carey, 2003; Crocket et al, 2009; Davies et al, 2002). This orientation offers perspectives on identity (Barraclough, 2014; Brown & Augusta-

Scott, 2007; Crocket, 2004; Freedman & Coombs, 1996; McNamee & Gergen, 1992), positioning and agency (Beaudoin, 2005; Davies, 1991; Drewery, 2005; Monk et al, 1997; White, 1991, 2007; Winslade; 2005) that crafts narrative therapy's unique approach to problems and therefore to the problem of shame. This approach can be seen in the narrative therapy literature on working with trauma (Beaudoin, 2005; Duval & Beres, 2007; Weingarten, 2003; White. 2004, 2005, 2007; Yuen, 2007, 2009), with sexual abuse (Durrant & Kowalski, 1990; Kamsler, 1990; Mann & Russell, 2003; Miller, Cardona & Hardin, 2007; Vercoe et al, 2004) , and with personal failure (White, 2002). It is also evident in the narrative therapy literature for working with shame as a result of sexual abuse (Baird, 1996; Durrant & White, 1990; McPhie & Chaffey, 1999; Dayal, Weaver & Domene, 2015; Joy, 1999; Benjamin & Zook-Stanley, 2012).

Narrative therapy offers a unique approach for working with people who have experienced sexual abuse (White, 2004, 2005; Yuen, 2007, 2009). A feature of this approach is an interest in asking questions that seek to discover the ways in which a person responded to the abuse they faced. This interest creates space for conversations about the ways in which responses to trauma can be seen as indications of what is deeply valued by a person. White (2004) says "The ways in which people respond to trauma, the steps they take in response to trauma, are based on what they give value to, on what they hold precious in life." (p. 47). I would argue that this is true of shame as a response. That shame as a response to trauma tells a story about the dislocation of something that is valued in a person's life. As well as this focus on the responses to trauma, narrative therapy is concerned with witnessing people in ways that is authenticating of them (Carey et al, 2003;

Freedman, 2014; Weingarten, 1998, 2000, 2003, 2010; White, 2007).

Compassionate witnessing by both the therapist and by outsider witness audiences provides a powerful antidote to shame.

Narrative therapy's interest in the stories of people's lives (White & Epston, 1990) and in externalising and re-authoring conversations (White, 2007) creates a theoretical and practical foundation for therapeutic conversations about shame.

CHAPTER FOUR

Method — A hikoi

I liken this research to a hikoi². A long hikoi. Like a hikoi it began with one step and was only completed by continuing to take steps. Like a hikoi, the end could not be seen until it was reached, and each section of the journey only revealed itself as it was travelled. Like a hikoi this research takes a stand, a stand against dividing practices (Foucault, 1982, as cited in Besley, 2002) and against diminishment, a stand for something of value. And as with a hikoi, I still had to eat and sleep along the way.

I write about eating and sleeping as way of introducing the everydayness of research, how the pursuit of research layers and folds into everyday life. To illustrate this here in my writing I layer the texts, showing not only the landscape of action of this research but also the landscape of consciousness (Bruner, 1986 as cited in White, 2007). This layering enacts the idea that the stories we use to describe our lived experience flow from these landscapes and that the performance of our identities flow from the stories that we tell. I layer the texts in an effort to represent 'lostness' (Lather, 2007). This lostness refers to both the experience of at times not knowing where I am or where I am going in the process of producing this research thesis, and also to the sense of loss of not being able express all of what became known to me during this research journey. By layering the writing with transcript data

² A journey, or long march – on behalf of something of value.

and diary-style data I invite the reader into a sense of the impossible task of giving a complete account of the journey. Lather (2007) writes:

The goal is getting people to no longer know what to do so that things might be done differently, so that we might “produce something that doesn’t yet exist” (Foucault, 1991, p. 121). This is the yes of the setting-to-work mode of postfoundational theory that faces unanswerable questions, the necessary experience of the impossible, in an effort to foster understanding, reflection, and action instead of a narrow translation of scientificity. (pp. 152-153)

In an attempt to experience the impossible, this research pays attention to the small and ordinary (Weingarten 1998) steps of action and meaning making that I took. I outline these small steps in this method chapter, firstly, the theory that supports me to give an autoethnographic account, and then describing the research process.

An autoethnographic account

This qualitative research emerged as a poststructural autoethnography. I did not set out to write an autoethnography as I had intended to study shame, not to study myself. What instead transpired was that the research revealed itself to me; it waited for me to see that I could begin to understand and write about the shame in my own life. Thus, I followed the research towards autoethnography.

Richardson and St.Pierre (2005) call the practice of autoethnography “writing as a method of “nomadic inquiry, a great part of that inquiry is accomplished in the writing... writing *is* thinking, writing *is* analysis, writing *is* indeed a seductive and tangled *method* of discovery” (p. 967). Their words capture my experience of

producing the text of this thesis. Writing made knowledge available to me. Much of what was generated as data only came forth as it was being written down, ideas and stories captured on whatever piece of paper was available, sparks of understanding growing into knowledge as the thoughts expanded onto the paper.

These data were neither in my interview transcripts nor in my fieldnotes where data are supposed to be, for how can one textualise everything one thinks and senses in the course of a study? But they were always already in my mind and body, and they cropped up unexpectedly and fittingly in my writing — fugitive, fleeting data that were excessive and out-of-category. My point here is that these data might have escaped entirely if I had not *written*; they were collected only *in the writing*. (Richardson & St.Pierre, 2005, p. 970)

In this way I recognise that not only has this thesis been produced, but I have produced myself as a researcher through writing myself and my research into being.

Poststructuralist writing

Locating this work as poststructuralist also points to the way this research takes in and reproduces discourse. Richardson & St. Pierre (2005) write that “Poststructuralism links language, subjectivity, social organisation, and power. The centrepiece is language. Language does not ‘reflect’ social reality but rather produces meaning and creates social reality” (p. 961). Meaning is fluid, is dependent upon the interpretation of the reader, and will create different meaning and different social realities for different readers. This thinking is influenced by Derrida's theorising of text. Callinicos (2004) comments on Derrida's statement 'Il n'y a pas de hors-texte' which is translated as 'there is no outside-text'.

[Derrida] was saying that once you see language as a constant movement of differences in which there is no stable resting point, you can no longer appeal to reality as a refuge independent of language. Everything acquires the instability and ambiguity that Derrida claimed to be inherent in language.

(para. 6)

Autoethnography foregrounds the presence of the author in the data, in the data generation, and in the meaning made of the data; “autoethnography is one of the approaches that acknowledges and accommodates subjectivity, emotionality, and the researcher's influence on research, rather than hiding from these matters or assuming they don't exist” (Ellis, Adams & Bochner, 2011, p. 2). This is especially relevant to this project due to the many positions I took up, namely researcher, ~~client~~ (see p. 52 for an explanation of the formatting of the word client), counsellor, writer, mother, wife, student, peer and friend. These positions overlapped and intertwined, contributing to the lostness and messiness of generating and making meaning from the data. It also contributed to the richness and thickness of the accounts -- each position creating different meaning. I return later to these overlapping positions and their influence on this thesis. But first I look at the process of setting up this research.

Setting up the research

My research design was based on generation of data with three steps.

- Layer one – a counselling conversation with Jean. Jean is a counsellor who agreed to collaborate in data generation with me. In this conversation I am in the client position.
- Layer two – a conversation in which the Jean's experience of the layer one counselling conversation is explored

- Layer three – a conversation in which my experience of the layer one counselling conversation is explored

My use of the expression “data generation” is purposeful:

To speak about data generating has two effects: it makes transparent both my researcher actions and my responsibilities in those actions. Firstly, it makes visible my actions in the producing of data: I am not a neutral participant, merely ‘gathering’ what is already there. In producing data, I am a practitioner: my actions in engaging with another actor generate the data that become available for further study in the next phase of the research process. (Crocket, 2004, p. 3)

I, too, am an active participant in the generation of this data. I am the primary site of the stories, or the ‘starting points’, from which the data were produced. Furthermore, data generation was not contained within the three structured conversations that were the formal data generating events, rather the data had begun to be generated long before the first conversation and continued to be produced during the writing. The term data generation also brings me into ethical relationship with my research participant. At no point in the creation of this thesis could either Jean or I have known all of what would be produced as data.

Data generation

I now map the steps taken in the set up and data generation stages of this research project. Borrowing from geographical language this map is topographical, I describe the major paths of this research as well as the side roads and features of the landscape of this project. Parker (as cited in Crocket, 2001) writes that “contradiction, inconsistency, ambiguity and ambivalence are the stuff of human

psychology” (p. 121). In layering the more visible steps with the less visible, more personal steps, I hope to show some of the ambiguity and ambivalence of this research project and to give a thicker account of this research journey.

Step – Keep a journal

Step – Apply for ethical approval from the University of Waikato Faculty of Education Research Ethics committee.

Step - Read, read, read –find a way of capturing all the ideas and concepts I am reading. Figure out how to juggle work and study and home.

Step – Invite a counsellor to collaborate with me in data generation. Jean’s name was offered as a possibility. I invited her to meet with me to discuss the research project and what might be required of her if she decided to participate.

Step – Figure out how to find the words I need to be able to tell my stories.

Keep writing in my journal, keep reading. I learn that Jean has agreed to be involved, Yay!

Step – Meet again with Jean. In this meeting we more thoroughly discussed the design of the research. Drawing from narrative curiosity (see White, 2007) and questions influenced by Interpersonal Process Recall (Larsen, Flesaker & Stege, 2008) (IPR) we collaborated on an outline of the questions that would guide the layer 2 & 3 conversations. (See appendix 2, 3 & 4).

In this meeting, Jean and I also reviewed a letter which outlined her rights as a participant and the ethical considerations of the study. Included in this letter was an invitation for Jean to indicate whether she would like to use a pseudonym, giving her the opportunity to take her time in considering this, and the freedom to change her

mind throughout the research. She agreed to participate and signed our agreement. (see appendix 1).

Step – Find ways to speak to those close to me about the stories I am planning to tell. Figuring out how to book the room I need and how to get the video cameras set up and recording.

Step – Meet with Jean for the layer one conversation.

Step - Try and make sense of what just occurred in this data generating step. Learn about the ways my body has responded to this inquiry and to movement. Become a proficient transcriber. Pack for our family holiday in the South Island.

Step - Transcribe the layer one conversation, taking it back to Jean for her to read and edit.

Wednesday July 13th 2016

I am on holiday with my family, we have journeyed to the South Island and are travelling around in a camper van. This research has come with me and I am spending the driving time with my computer furiously transcribing the layer one conversation. I am juxtaposed between listening to myself (through headphones) speak about shame and diminishment, whilst surrounded by majestic scenery and excited children.

Step – Meet with Jean for the layer two conversation: In preparation for this meeting Jean selected a segment of the layer one recording (our counselling conversation) for us to discuss. Together Jean and I watched the selected segment. I interviewed Jean using modified Interpersonal Process Recall (Larsen, Flesaker & Stege, 2008)

(IPR) techniques, along with narrative curiosity (see White, 2007) to learn about what resonated with her from the layer one conversation.

Interpersonal process recall

I pause here to give a give a brief outline of interpersonal process recall theory and techniques. Interpersonal process recall (IPR) is a method of re-visiting an interaction with the intention of discovering the (internal) experiences of the people involved. This requires that the initial interaction be video recorded, with people given the opportunity to select specific moments to be revisited. For counselling purposes it can be used to encourage a reflexive stance towards a person's professional practice of counselling, or as in this research, IPR can be used to further explore the experiences of a person seeking counselling; "Using IPR, researchers are able to access clients' unspoken in-session experiences as they are remembered to have occurred during the session" (Larsen, Flesaker & Stege, 2008, p. 20). As Jean and I both identify as narrative therapists we wove an understanding of narrative practice together with the IPR technique. Especially relevant were our understandings of outsider witnessing practices (White, 2007) in which the people in the position of witness are asked to notice how a person's story resonates with them. This weaving of IPR and narrative practice helped to shape the questions that I had produced as a guide to the layer 2 and layer 3 conversations (appendix 2 & 3). These questions helped to guide the reflexive stance that Jean and I took in these conversations.

Step - Transcribe the layer two conversation and take this back to Jean for her to read and edit.

Step - think about which piece of video I want to bring as the focus of the layer three conversation.

How will I do this? Re-read the transcripts and re-watch the video, what do I notice happening in my body, where is my curiosity drawn to? Which part of this conversation surprised me or was different than how I thought it was going to be?

The beginning, the beginning was different than how I thought it would be. I am still curious about the way this conversation started. I am curious about this portion of our conversation. I want to discover more about why I thought it would be different. I am interested in Jean asking me questions about my experience of these moments.

Step – Meet with Jean for the layer three conversation - Together Jean and I watched my selected segment from the layer one counselling conversation. Together we discussed why I had chosen this piece and what it was like to revisit this part of the conversation.

Step - Transcribe the layer three conversation and take it back to Jean for her to read and edit.

Step - Attempt to recognise the meaning that is being made along the way.

“How do meanings change? How have some meanings emerged as normative and others been eclipsed or disappeared? What do these processes reveal about how power is constituted and operates?” (Scott, 1988, p. 35).

Reading the texts

My next steps took me into a different closeness with the data. Reading and re-reading, highlighting and underlining, certain words and phrases took prominence on the page. From these words emerged research themes and temporary categories were created. Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011) write about “ethnographers becoming *participant observers* in the culture — that is, by taking *field notes* of cultural happenings as well as their part in and others’ engagement with these happenings” (pp. 2-3). My field notes are made up of the three conversations and the diary notes and stories I documented during the research process. Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011) go on to say that “when researchers do *autoethnography*, they retrospectively and selectively write about epiphanies that stem from, or are made possible, by being part of a culture and/or by possessing particular cultural identity” (p. 3).

As I wrote earlier in approaching this project I was shaped by multiple identity claims. The experiences of shame, of relationships, and of counselling that I call on to produce this project are constructed through the lenses of these identity claims and within the cultural specificities of my life. Morgan (2000) writes

The meanings that we give to these events occurring in a sequence across time do not occur in a vacuum. There is always a context in which the stories of our lives are formed. This context contributes to the interpretations and meanings that we give to events. The context of gender, class, race, culture and sexual identity are powerful contributors to the plot of the stories by which we live. (p. 9)

As I came closer to my research data, that is, as I read the transcripts and my diary entries, as I watched the videoed conversations, and as I witnessed myself being produced through the process of writing, I noticed that different tellings of the same story became available. These different tellings represented the different subject positions I took up in relation to different people, events and thoughts that I encountered throughout this research. Burr (2003) writes that “we behave, think and feel differently depending on who we are with, what we are doing and why” (p. 31). Each different subject position is constructed by language and is offered on the terms of particular discourses. For example, the language that constructs the subject position ‘client’ speaks about a person who needs help, a person who is privileged to receive the attention of the more highly skilled practitioner who has agreed to see them. I could not avoid the call to these subject positions, but could choose to accept or to try and resist the call. If I accepted, or if resistance was not available to me then I was “locked into the system of rights, speaking rights and obligations that are carried with that position” (Burr, 2003, p. 111). The subject positions I was called to take up included those of ~~client~~, counsellor, and researcher. Had I been locked into these systems it would not be possible for me to describe them to you here, as they would be invisible to me. What makes it possible for me to describe these positions is the concept of agency, here Davies (1991) expands

By making clear the ways in which a person is subjected by discourse, poststructuralist theory shows how agency is fundamentally illusory. However, it opens up another possibility, related to the idea of the speaking/writing subject, who can use some of the understanding of poststructuralist theory itself to regain another kind of agency. The speaking/writing subject can move within and between discourses, can see precisely how they subject her, can

use the terms of one discourse to counteract, modify, refuse or go beyond the other, both in terms of her own experienced subjectivity and in the way in which she chooses to speak in relation to the subjectivities of others. (p. 46)

With a poststructuralist viewpoint I can see how I came to take up these different subject positions, and 'seeing' provides me with options and creates space into which I can manoeuvre myself. This seeing also illuminates the previous not seeing. When I was unaware of the discursive position calls, I could not see the ways in which I was being positioned. Seeing the ways in which I was called to take up certain subject positions loosens the grip of that position and makes visible "lines of flight" that take me beyond the constraints of limited speaking rights.

Seeing the different layers

I make visible these three different layers of subject position – client, counsellor, and researcher – by describing the ways in which each was called; the different subtleties in the performance of the story, the speaking rights and obligations of that position.

Drewery (2005) writes:

I am interested in how power relations are both called into existence and played out. The subject position one chooses to take up in response is the outcome of the interplay between speakers; it is not a simple, one-way power play. The subject thus produced is a subject-in-relation, which may be called into existence briefly, or it may be longer lasting. (p. 312)

The call to different positions

Client

I was called into the ~~client~~ position as I prepared to and as I spoke my childhood story of shame to Jean. When called to this position I experienced less access to other knowledges I carried about counselling theory and practice, and I experienced more acutely the affect of shame — the physical experience of shame that manifested in my body. In this position I experienced myself as a *subjected* subject (Drewery & Winslade, 1997) with fewer speaking rights.

Counsellor

I was called into a counselling position as I attempted to make sense of my experience as the ~~client~~. Counselling discourse positioned me with greater access to knowledge about finding alternatives to a problem story and I noticed a greater freedom to embrace curiosity when in this position. This embrace of curiosity was made possible by what I would describe as an increased sense of safety that came from being in the counselling position, a safety that made it possible for me to ask questions of myself that in the ~~client~~ position I could not. In the counsellor position I experienced more speaking rights, my ideas seemed to carry more legitimacy, and I spoke with greater confidence.

Researcher

I was further called to take up the research position as I worked to produce a 'good enough' research thesis and to also produce myself as a 'good enough' researcher (Lather, 2007). I include these ideas of 'good enough' from Lather because the discourse of research called me to recognise myself as a 'non-experienced

researcher'. This subject position invited doubt in my ability as a researcher and required me to dedicate much of my time to ensuring that I did not 'fail' at producing research. Lather's idea of 'good enough' offered a different, less exacting position, within the discursive field of research, for me to step into. Engaging with this project from the research position invited consideration of the ways in which the desire to research shame influenced the content and direction of the data generation during the conversations with Jean. Lather (2007) speaks about the "inevitable weight of researcher interpretation upon the story told" (p. 137), and in this project it was not only the weight of researcher interpretation, but the weight of researcher data as well. Positioned as a 'non-experienced researcher' the speaking rights available to me as researcher were limited at first, but increased as the research developed and as my identity as a researcher became more thickly storied.

In many moments I experienced myself move between all three positions in rapid succession, and at other times I was called to a more lengthy performance of identity from a particular subject position. For example, leading up to and engaging in the layer one conversation with Jean I was called to a lengthy performance of the ~~client~~ client position. My daily performance of stories embodied the vulnerability of this position and my body responded with changes in heart rate, tension in my chest and discomfort in my stomach. Later on as I began to closely engage with the data I noticed a more fluid movement between the different positions. Certain words or phrases would call me into the client position, and then in trying to make meaning of these events I would move to a counsellor position. Furthermore, as I sought to notice what this might mean to the research project I was called into a research position. Noticing these layers of performance contributed to the lostness, the

richness and the messiness of this process. By forcing stories to become uprooted from a notion of permanence and structure the ambiguity and fluidity of stories became more visible. Speaking about her own desire to write in a way that privileged lostness over certainty, Lather (2007) writes about layering stories.

Trying to find a form that enacts that there is never a single story and that no story stands still, we practiced a kind of dispersal and forced mobility of attention by putting into play simultaneously multiple stories that fold in and back on one another, raising for readers questions about bodies, places and times, disrupting comfort spaces of thinking and knowing. (p. 139)

This thesis offers a multi-layered account of the different performances of a story; “layering complexity and foregrounding problems: thinking data differently, outside easy intelligibility and seductions of the mimetic in order to work against consumption and voyeurism” (Lather, 2007, p. 137). My hope is to offer the reader some glimpse of the messiness of the process at the same time as offering enough narrative coherence for my account to be intelligible. By offering a variety of tellings of a story I hope that there might be space for the reader to find gaps for their own interpretation, or perhaps to recognise themselves in the text.

By working the limits of intelligibility and foregrounding the inadequacy of thought to its object, a stuttering knowledge is constructed that elicits an experience of the object through its very failures of representation. (Lather, 2007, p. 137)

In writing this thesis I have worked to give a close account of ‘where I have arrived at’, ‘what it was like along the way’ and ‘what might be ahead’. This pursuit creates a tension. “The final story must fit the event while at the same time bringing an order

and meaningfulness that was not necessarily apparent in the event as it happened” (p. 15).

Ethics

Drawing on the work of Ellis (2007) I acknowledge three dimensions of ethics that apply to this project. The first two, as described by Guillemin and Gillam (2004) are procedural ethics and ethics in practice. Procedural ethics are the structures such as informed consent and confidentiality that are set in place as the ethical foundation of this project. Ethics in practice accounts for the “ethically important moments that come up in the field” (Ellis, 2007, p. 4) and the third dimension is relational ethics, being “true to one’s character and responsible for one’s actions and their consequences on others” (Slattery & Rapp, 2003, p. 55). Walking with these three ethical dimensions as a guide influenced the way in which I approached and proceeded with this project, with relational ethics foregrounded as this thesis has taken shape. I gave careful thought about the ways in which this research would care for the participant and for the stories she told, the ways in which I would tell my own stories and which stories I would choose to tell, and the ways in which I would write about the people who emerged in the autoethnographic stories I told. Ellis (2007) asks “what are our responsibilities toward intimate others who are implicated in the stories we write about ourselves?” (p. 5), and I respond that my responsibility is, to as much as possible, prevent any harm to these others in the process of producing this thesis.

Relational ethics

As a genre of writing and research, autoethnography starts with personal experiences and studies “us” in relationships and situations. Doing autoethnography involves a back-and-forth movement between experiencing and examining a vulnerable self and observing and revealing the broader context of that experience. When we write about ourselves, we also write about others. (Ellis, 2007, pp. 13-14)

Further to this Ellis, Adams and Bochner (2011) write that “researchers do not exist in isolation. When we conduct and write research, we implicate others in our work” (p. 6). This implication of others in my study has been carefully considered. I have worked to find ways to speak about the “us” in relationships and situations without causing harm to the other. I have been cautious about the stories I have chosen to tell and to write about, choosing not to focus on stories that might have had an adverse effect on my family, I have been selective in the transcript material chosen for reflection. I have also held relational ethics in mind when considering how to approach the analysis.

This desire to be care-full with others and with myself flows out of narrative therapy, out of my own personal ethic to be aware of how my being and my work affects others. I have taken great effort to avoid harm to others. I considered the possible conflicts of interest. One of the identified conflicts was that this research placed me in the position where I was researching another's professional practice. Addressing this tension in her own research of therapy, Burman (1992) writes “I feel constraints and responsibilities in how I represent the therapist, as well as the client and the project of therapy” (pp. 497-498). Echoing Burman I have carefully considered the

“interpretive stance” (Burman, 1992, p. 498) that I choose to take as I collect and collate noticings and as I write this document.

Interpretive Stance

Returning to my research curiosity helps me to define my interpretive stance. In chapter one (see page 4-5) of this thesis I describe the questions that guided this research.

Foregrounding these questions as I read the data generated by Jean and me guided me towards seeking out the moments when I recognised that the performance of my identity was being influenced by shame. It drew me to notice the ways in which the counselling conversation had an effect on my relationship with shame, and the ways in which the questions offered by Jean created space for movement. Adopting this interpretive stance made it possible for me to draw from the data what was relevant to my research curiosities and to release this research project from attempting to notice all aspects of researchable material that might have been available.

Client

I pause to draw attention to the word ~~client~~. Drawing on the deconstructive work of Derrida (1997) I have placed the word ~~client~~ under erasure.

This process of placing meanings, words and texts ‘under erasure’ and excavating the traces of other discourses contained therein not only deconstructed ‘binary opposites’, but also the multiple other meanings that exist within the ‘chora’, or open space between these opposites. (Speedy, 2005, p. 284)

While the word client may lend itself to dividing practices as it places the client on one end of a binary and the counsellor at the other for the purposes of this research, I have chosen to use the form *client* to describe the times when I was the person positioned to seek counselling. I have done this to fully appreciate how identifying as *client* might contribute to my experience of the counselling conversation, and yet to show that my position was only client-like.

Collating stories

The stories collated in the next chapter are arranged under three headings. These headings point to dominant narrative themes that have emerged. As stories emerged from the data they were gently nudged in the direction of a particular narrative. However, much of what I noticed floats, overlaps and finds resonance throughout all three narratives.

The first narrative theme is witnessing. This section explores the progression of my awareness of shame during this research, looking at the ways in which I believe shame had an influence on what was possible in the conversations between Jean and me. The second narrative theme is speaking. This section has a conceptual focus on discourse and the role of language and speaking. Specific focus is given to the ways in which language and speaking created opportunities for shifts in my relationship with shame. The third narrative theme is movement. This section tells stories about moments when I noticed that different performances of story were available to me, moments of shifts in the landscape of consciousness, shifts that contributed to new meaning being made of past events.

CHAPTER FIVE

Witnessing myself

Shame keeps us from telling our own stories and prevents us from listening to others tell their stories. We silence our voices and keep our secret out of the fear of disconnection. When we hear others talk about their shame, we often blame them as a way to protect ourselves from feeling uncomfortable.

Hearing someone talk about a shaming experience can sometimes be as painful as actually experiencing it for ourselves. (Brown, 2007, P. xxv)

Through this research project I made it possible to witness myself. I asked myself about shame and I studied my response. This witnessing has not been as painless as I initially anticipated and I can now see how choosing to investigate shame has diverted me off a wide, familiar — although at times confusing — path and down a much more bumpy, difficult track. Down this bumpy track I have experienced the unsettling effects of attempting to notice and deconstruct shame. As I wrote in the introduction, prior to undertaking this research I did not carry an experience-near (White, 2007) appreciation of my relationship with shame. What follows is an account of how witnessing myself made it possible for me to begin to notice and name this layer called shame.

Definitions of shame

Shame as I am referring to it here can be thought of in the following ways:

Shame is the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing we are flawed and therefore unworthy of acceptance and belonging. (Brown, 2007, p. 5)

To feel shame is to feel seen in a painfully diminished sense. The self feels exposed both to itself and to anyone present. It is this sudden, unexpected feeling of exposure and accompanying self-consciousness that characterise the essential nature of the affect shame. Contained in the experience of shame is the piercing awareness of ourselves as fundamentally deficient in some vital way as a human being. (Kaufman, 1992, p. ix-x)

Asking different questions

Noticing shame began when I started to ask myself different questions about my own experiences. In late February when this research project was just forming I began to document my thoughts and experiences. I wrote my thoughts down onto any available piece of paper, scribbling furiously, capturing new thoughts. These pieces of paper came to form what I would now call my informal research diary and have richly added to the data generated for this research.

One of the first entries into this research diary begins as a lament about my first university supervision meeting and concludes with a series of questions. What I didn't notice at the time of writing, but becomes noticeable as I revisit the text, are the threads of what I now identify as shame that weave through this entry. Here is a portion of this entry in which I am describing being late to my initial university supervision meeting:

Friday 26th February 2016

This was horrible for me, I detest being late and I am hoping to make a good impression with Kathie so that she will have confidence in my ability to complete this research thesis. In this state of mind I struggled through the university supervision meeting feeling unprepared and out of my depth. This contributed to a sense of unease about the whole project and began to undermine my confidence about what I had chosen to study and why I had chosen to study it. I began to wonder if I had made the right decision, or if in my efforts to appear competent I had jumped ahead of myself.

Witnessing myself as I read this part of the story again I notice the call to the subject position 'novice researcher'. Located in this subject position the performance of my identity is influenced by discourses of academia, and within the binary of success and failure. Uncertainty about research and academic abilities threaten this lightly-held identity as novice researcher and I witness myself experiencing shame. Shame about being late, and attaching itself to this lateness shame are ideas that suggest that I might be unsuitable for the task at hand, perhaps not organised enough to do research, or not able to manage myself and my time wisely. Shame about academic performance, my thoughts projecting forward into the future, imagining academic failure and the shame this might bring. This shame attached to academia questions my ability to produce acceptable work and privileges others knowledge about my abilities over my own.

The threads of shame in this excerpt are not foreign to me as I had come to accept and take for granted this sort of thinking and internal dialogue. I appreciate now that

this thinking was captured. Not only does it contribute to a growing understanding of how threads of shame might flow within many of the affective experiences of my life, it also gives me the opportunity to consider the ways in which my internal dialogue has shifted through the process of this research.

Noticing threads of research

In the second part of the diary entry I notice a shift:

I approached my confusion by speaking to mum and wondering out loud about other possible avenues of research. I think the problem for me and this original idea is that I am not entirely positive about what it is I am hoping to discover. This is where my thinking has gone:

How does shame affect my life?

In what ways does the fear of shame prevent me from doing certain things?

How many things does shame prevent me from saying?

What are these things?

Will my life be richer, more free, less policed/monitored/controlled if I have the courage to be vulnerable and speak these things?

To whom should I speak them?

How does it matter whom I say it to?

Are the effects of speaking these things short or long term?

Does it begin by feeling better or worse, and then what happens?

I witness a tentative move towards taking up the subject position 'researcher'. As I speak from this position the tone of the writing shifts from one of self-blame and

uncertainty to one of curiosity. From the landscape of research I began to ask questions of the uncertainty, questions that were genuinely unknown and as such offered themselves as sites ripe for exploration. These questions became the starting point for the work of considering shame as a present-day problem for me, catalysts for this research. I also note the frequency of the word shame. Prior to this research my use of the word shame was remarkably minimal. I believe that this is an important aspect of the word *shame* to hold onto, to remember that I was uncomfortable thinking about or speaking the word shame. I believe that if this was the case for me it may be so for others. Brown (2007) says that “hearing someone talk about a shaming experience can sometimes be as painful as actually experiencing it for ourselves” (p. xxv). This is why my research curiosity included how shame might possibly interact with the counsellor who is witness to the stories of shame within a counselling conversation, the effect of these stories on the counsellor and the counselling decisions made in response to the effect of these stories.

Shame as a metal suit

The next time I wrote about shame in my field diary was in June. I woke before my alarm. In my mind a scene from my childhood of unwanted sexual touching was being remembered, this was an experience that I was preparing to speak to Jean about. I lay silently in my bed and allowed this scene to be replayed. I had never before allowed these memories to surface and as I replayed this scene I experienced the affect of shame throughout my whole body.

Saturday 4th June 2016

The image, more of a feeling, was that I was encased in a rigid metal suit, my arms were straight out from my sides and I had very limited movement. I certainly couldn't walk anywhere, perhaps just move slightly against the metal sides of the suit. This is shame. Stuck, cold, tense, uncomfortable, aware, rigid.

As I lay there feeling this shame encase my body, I tried to witness myself. I wanted to move beyond just experiencing this shame to a place where I was able to make some sense of this experience. As I witnessed myself I recognised that there were two layers of meaning I was making, one from the position of ~~client~~ and second from the position of counsellor. The identity *client* called me to make meaning from a position of limited knowledge and power, influenced by pain, sorrow, and shame: This story was a horrible secret that I should just keep to myself. In the counsellor position I was able to lay claim to different knowledge, knowledge about narrative therapy, mo(ve)ment and alternative stories (White, 2007): This was a story I needed to tell, and that telling this story would help me to understand my relationship with shame.

I am interested in the influence of vulnerability on how I experienced shame in this moment. Preparing to speak this story to Jean required me to come out from behind the wall of silence that I thought was protecting me from rejection. This step required bravery, not only the bravery to tell my story, but the bravery to permit myself to request that someone else acknowledge me and acknowledge this story. This vulnerability concern flowed from the covert discourses that shaped me, a gendered discourse that positions women as annoying, or hard work. Shame and fear suggested that my story might be received as annoying, trivial, or a waste of time.

Recognising this idea as having its roots in shame, I tried to imagine the conversation I would have with Jean. Calling on my knowledge of narrative therapy I used this knowledge to imagine what might happen in the counselling conversation, as I did this I noticed that fear and judgement began to subside.

Saturday 4th June 2016

As I considered what would happen as shame was addressed I felt the suit begin to melt, the metal softened and began to slump to the floor, movement became much more possible, a feeling like I could be less hard on myself. As if the suit is created by the cruel words spoken to myself.

Jumping forward in time I include here the portion of our transcript where Jean and I talk about my experience of this metal suit.

Layer one conversation - Monday 4th July 2016

J. so this fear and shame thing what's it look like?

L. so once in the morning I woke up and was thinking about shame and I had this feeling of being very rigid like I was in a metal suit and there wasn't very much room to move and my arms were stuck out wide,

J. hmm, so it's a metal suit that encases you

L. yeah,

J. and there's not much room to move

L. not much room to move, you're pretty stuck, yeah and I would say that's fear and shame yeah, the fear stops you from doing anything,

J. and does, you know it puts these ideas in your head about not being good enough, does that have a voice?... or does it just slip the ideas in

L. it's never, it's never, yeah, it slips the ideas in

J. and does it yell at you or not?

L. it doesn't yell at me, it's more of a whisper actually

J. and the ideas that it slips in

L. definitely a whisper, yeah its suggestions

J. so what kind of suggestions are they?

L. ummm.....kind of like 'they know all about who you are, so that's why they're thinking those things'

J so it almost like there's this idea that if they really saw the real you

L. yeah, yeah they've got this pretty clear picture about who you are

J. so what's kind of implicit in that is this kind of idea that you're not ok

L. yeah, yeah, they've figured it out

J. and so what does it hope for you what does it want to achieve in your life?

L. its telling me that it's going to keep me safe,

J, mm, do you need that?

L. but um, but it says that the way to do that is just to not really say what I'm thinking, like not to say stuff, yeah not to speak out.

I notice Jean and I are co-researching (Epston, 1999), together we explore this story of the metal suit. Space is created by the questions about my experience. I am being invited to fill this space with what Foucault would call my local knowledges of my experience of shame. Speaking these words generates new knowledge, the beginnings of an alternative story, a “unique account” (White, 2007). This unique account creates opportunities for movement. This movement is only subtle, but is enough for me to gain a different perspective on how shame influences the ways I am responding to life, the ways I am performing the stories of my life.

Performance of stories

If we accept that persons organise and give meaning to their experience through the storying of experience, and that in the performance of these stories they express selected aspects of their lived experience, then it follows that these stories are constitutive — shaping lives and relationships. (White & Epston, 1990, p. 12)

I began to see that layers of shame were contributing to the meaning I was making of everyday events. Layers of shame that had folded into my life and were folding out again, influencing the performing my identity. Recognising these layers I began to alter my position in my relationship with shame. I recognized that some of the negative identity messages that ran through my life could be traced back to shame. In many subtle ways shame had inscribed itself on my life. Noticing this and speaking about this with Jean invited me to take an agentic position from which I could begin to refuse or reject (Davies, 1991) the messages that were connected to shame. I set about downgrading (White, 2005) the position of shame in my life.

Contexts for shame

Seeking to further increase my understanding of shame I began to name the discursive contexts in which I noticed shame was most likely to appear. Replaying childhood stories that carried elements of shame, I noticed common threads running through the stories, threads about my body, its shape, size and smell, threads about sexuality, what is acceptable and what is not, and threads about expectations in friendships. Examining stories from my adult life I notice threads of shame are more closely tied to ideas of success and failure, success in marriage, success in motherhood, and success in relationships with other women.

The cultural norms that shaped my childhood were heavily influenced by my upbringing in the church and my life at small rural schools. There was no space for stories of sexual touching between young girls. Purity was privileged. I was shaped by heteronormative discourses which suggested that early roleplaying of sexual or romantic relationships was acceptable if it was heterosexual. For example catch and kiss between boys and girls was a game we played and giggled about, and while not being suggested or sanctioned by adults, it was not frowned upon. The same activity between two girls was not imaginable. It would not have been a giggling matter.

Additional to these church and school generated cultural norms were discourses of sexual abuse. The message I heard was that people who had experienced sexual abuse were damaged goods (MacIntosh et al. 2016), and that abuse had far reaching and lifelong consequences. I pictured people being doomed to a life of difficulty and sorrow. Surrounded by these ideas I made meaning of the particular events of my childhood which I have spoken about in this research. My response to the meaning I made was to keep silent about these particular experiences. The

silence was informed by the ideas that the stories I carried would not be deemed acceptable and the unacceptability of these stories was perpetuated by the silence I kept.

Silence as a theme emerged as I examined the data from the layer one conversation. I noticed that silence had become a way of life for me, not just silence about childhood stories of shame, but also silence about my ideas and opinions. This silence had crept into many of my relationships and was especially affecting the performance of my identity as a friend with other women. Continuing the work that had begun with the deconstruction assignment presented at Maniaroa marae, I explored with Jean the possibility that shame was playing a role in the life of the problems I experienced with female friendships. As Jean and I talked about my relationship with other women I began to notice an internalized voice of shame that scrutinized my behaviour as I interacted with other women.

[Foucault] was primarily concerned with isolating those techniques through which people initiate their own active self formation. Foucault contends that this self formation has a long and complicated history as it takes place through a variety of operations on people's own bodies, thoughts and conduct (Foucault, 1980) These operation characteristically entail a process of self understanding through internalized dialogue mediated through external cultural norms (Foucault, 1980, 1982). (Madigan, 1998, p. 19)

I most acutely noticed this process of self formation when I had been in a conversation with another woman. As I pictured my actions and my speaking through the other woman's eyes I would experience judgement, I imagine the other person

thinking that I am talking too much, or that what I am saying is annoying or boring, or worse that I am hard work to be around, that I am a burden. I write about it here in my research diary

Monday 25th July 2016

For me my shame triggers are when I start to imagine what someone else is thinking about me and my behaviour. Most often my imagined story is not very nice and I find that shame quickly takes over. When shame takes over in this way it encourages me to back off from this person, to move away, to agree with everything they say. Compassion for myself becomes very small, but also compassion for the other person diminishes also because in my mind they are not thinking very nice things about me ergo they are not a very nice person. So shame further manages to disconnect me from another. I imagine this response is also quite confusing and perhaps off-putting for the other person also, as they now experience me distancing myself and becoming cold towards them, whilst simultaneously trying to ingratiate myself to them.

In coming to recognise the threads of shame that were influencing how I viewed the way others were seeing me I noticed that there were two different discursive terrains in which shame operated, an overt terrain and a more covert terrain. The overt terrain contained the more recognisable and commonly discussed issues that women face such a body shape, beauty, and sexuality. These overt messages were not the most distressing to me. What I now consider to be of greater concern were the more subtle, less recognisable messages of the covert terrain, these were messages about woman being annoying, off-putting, tiring, trying, or hard work. These messages, disguised as everyday ordinary truths, have been more difficult to

deconstruct. They contributed to me carrying a thin description (White, 2007) of myself as someone who was not worthwhile as a friend and not very good at maintaining female friendships. This thin description contributed to how I read the stories of interaction between myself and other women, and contributed to the performance of my identity as friend, keeping alive threads of shame that suggested I was not the sort of person that others wanted to be friends with.

Wednesday 31st August 2016

Prior to this research my relationship with shame was unexplored and tangled. I frequently experienced what I would now call shame, especially as I examined what I perceived to be deficits in my abilities in relationships with other women. Shame brought with it confusion and self-doubt. This contributed to a dominant story developing, the features of this story were that I needed to work hard to be liked and that questioning others' ideas or speaking my own ideas too strongly would be injurious to any friendship. This invited me into a position of chasing friendships, working hard to seek out potential female relationships whilst simultaneously doubting and questioning my interactions and experiencing shame at my perceived shortcomings and failures in interactions. Shame would invite me to replay the conversations that I had had with others. Shame would then seek out any inkling of the other person seeming bored, disinterested, offended or turned off by my speaking. This would then be carefully dissected and recorded for instructional purposes. Shame would remind me 'more care must be taken, we can't afford to put these friendships in jeopardy like we have done all our life'.

The curiosity that arose for me when I began to notice this thin story was how, if in any way, does this story of shame in relation to other women have ties to the early story of shame from my childhood? One way I noticed that these stories were connected was through what I call the slinky³ or the spring of shame.

The shame spring

The first time I wrote about shame being like a spring was here in June.

Saturday 4th June 2016

Collapsing time, like a spring. Events occur and while it appears that time has shifted, shame collapses the spring and each event is present in this moment of time.

This image of a collapsed spring helped me to see the ways in which shame was able to make a problem feel bigger than it needed to be. What happens is that when an event that brings with it shame occurs, the spring that stretches out time and holds it in place collapses. This squashing of time brings together all of the shame events from throughout my life and connects them to this present shame event. The result is overwhelming shame.

Wednesday 31st August 2016

This coiled spring is my story of shame. Tangled, intersected, overlapping. Whenever shame would make an appearance in my life it came not as a single stand-alone experience, rather it came tangled up and intertwined with many other experiences of shame. Reminding me of all the reasons why I was less than, or why I was inadequate. So when I came to decide to speak about shame it made sense to me to try and start at what I thought was the

³ Slinky – a coil of spring marketed as a toy

beginning. The effect that the slinky of shame had upon my reasoning was to suggest that all my shame and shortcomings were connected to this event that warranted shame.

Notice here the use of the words 'an event that warranted shame', I will return to these words in the next section on language.

The collapsing spring of shame contributed to the problem story of perceived disconnection and unworthiness, a problem story that presented these shame moments as evidence of flawed character. This collapsed spring of shame was very present in my life in the days leading up to my time with Jean.

Sunday 3rd July 2016

Today is the day before the counselling conversation,

The collapsing of time is causing many different shame stories to mix and mingle. The character suggestions from one story is communicating to the character suggestions from another. And so here I experience ideas coming from both experiences when I am 9 and 10, j - the caravan, the other caravan/trailer? integrating with experiences when I am 19 - 20, Fiji, Caught up in there are memories from intermediate (12-13yrs) bike pants, the boy from the field,

These events do not define who I am, but in thinking about speaking about shame they are now alive in my active memory.

They are being replayed and revived.

I suppose I am surprised by how these stories are bouncing forth, and how I recognise the silence I have kept about them. All of these stories have never been spoken, and I can see that that means that they have not changed since they were formed. What I mean is that the meaning I made of these stories when they first happened is the meaning I still make of them now. This has not shifted. And so when I remember them it brings shame. The story has not been contextually reconsidered, shame still trumps when I think about them.

It is important to notice here how the closer I came to the moment when I would speak aloud my story of shame to the counsellor, the more intense my replaying of shameful stories became. As I searched for ways to communicate this story I was opening the door for this and other stories to come to the fore of my memory. It was not that these stories had been buried, they had just been kept silent. And now I was facing a conversation in which I would be speaking these stories, I would need to form them into speakable language.

During the moments in which I was searching for this speakable language shame was fully present in my body, uncomfortably close, I felt it in my chest, and in my stomach. Like inviting a snake to come and live with you so that you can study it, there was simultaneous fear and intrigue.

Counsellor compassion

During this time of experiencing shame up close, I recognise that there were other knowledges at work. These knowledges allowed me to witness myself with compassion and to offer hope and safety. I attribute these knowledges to narrative therapy and to my own practice of counselling. I encouraged myself to name the

problem. I called it 'unwanted sexual touching', I called it 'feeling different' and 'not as good as other people', I called it 'shame'. I spoke to myself using externalised language, working hard to accept that I am not the problem, that shame was the problem. I began to separate myself from shame.

Layers of witnessing

I have continued to compassionately witness myself during this research project. This witnessing has taken on many different forms. Three that I want to highlight here are witnessing the poetic in my speaking, witnessing myself on video, and witnessing myself through documentation.

Witnessing the poetic

In the second chapter of this thesis I wrote about how the gift of witnessing enriched my experience of storytelling at Maniaroa Marae. I applied this practice of witnessing, resonance and poetry to my own speaking and what emerged was a rescued speech poem. This poem flowed from words re-captured from the transcript and spoken about in a supervision conversation.

The day that had been coming

Distracted

Short

On edge

Jumpy

The day that had been coming

The weight

The wait

Spelling it both ways

The day that had been coming

I needed to say

That

What I had been carrying

And then I could move.

Stretching my understanding of poetic language and why it deserves noticing I appreciate the work of Speedy (2005) in the domain of poetry in therapy. Here she cites some of the influences in her turn towards poetic listening and documenting.

Within the work of Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray and Hélène Cixous (see Robbins, 2000 or Cavallaro, 2003 for a contemporary overview) poetic language is regarded as an act of resistance to established assumptions and 'social constraints' (Kristeva, 1974). These writers suggest that poetic language speaks to that which is not fixed or known and that which 'moves or escapes' and appears to defy the confines of conventional language. Cixous (1991, p. 92) proposes that the performance of our lives outside the confines of that which is (always already) known can perhaps 'only be done poetically'.
(p. 285)

Attuning my ear to the poetic language that emerged from the conversations between Jean and me distilled what was being spoken into a more intense account.

As the poetic language was strung together it gave the words a meaningful lyricism, capturing and presenting knowledge that was not as apparent when the words were initially being spoken.

Witnessing the poetic in my own speaking heightens my receptiveness to poetic language spoken by another. I am keen to further develop my ear for the poetic as I have witnessed many times the mo(ve)ment (Crocket et al, 2009) that is made possible through the gift of having my own poetic language captured and curated and I hope to offer this gift to others.

Witnessing myself on video

Alongside noticing poetic language, another layer of witnessing emerged. This layer noticed how it felt to watch myself tell my stories. Of particular interest to me was when I realised that there was a difference between witnessing myself by reading my own words, witnessing myself by listening to the recorded conversations, and witnessing myself by watching myself speaking on the video. Depree (2016) writes about “the transformative power of video in the “art” of shaping one’s life in relationship to others” (p. 249). And here I speak to Jean about the shaping effects of witnessing myself on video:

Layer three - Monday 15th August 2016

L. what’s most fascinating is that when I watch myself I see a person telling a story and I feel proud of them for telling the story it seems like that's a really, um something that’s quite strong for them to be doing. but when I read it, it's harder.

J. mmm

L. Yeah, when I just read the text (of our layer one conversation), or thinking about it coming up to, like, when I wasn't looking at the screen (of the video recording of our layer one conversation) and I was looking at the words on the page (of the transcript), that was harder, but as I watched myself on the screen it was less hard.

J. what do you think is the difference?

L. I don't know, just um, I don't know, maybe it's witnessing my humanity as I do it

J. mm, so in black and white it's what, raw or bare?

L. yeah it's raw, and you kind of can speed through reading it, or it's fast, it doesn't have the um, the thoughtfulness that you get when you're just watching it perhaps,

J. what does that thoughtfulness say to you, what does it tell you

L. umm, yeah, as I watch myself saying the story, ah, I can kind of see other people who've been brave enough to speak their stories and I think whenever I see somebody else who's been brave enough to speak their story I've always valued that,

J. mm

L. and then I've thought that's a brave thing to do, and so I suppose when I get to see myself doing it,

J. that looks like a brave thing

L. that looks like a brave thing to do, yeah. um yeah,

In this section of transcript I am generating knowledge about how different modes of witnessing produce different responses. When I witnessed myself by reading the story as it was written down, I noticed a closeness of intensity. Without the cadence of voice the account could be read in a way that was faster than when it was spoken. Without the gaps for pauses, breaths and uncertainty there was a harshness present

as I read the story. In comparison when I watched myself on the video there were pauses and gaps, tentative voices making space for uncertainty. As I watched I noticed that I felt a deep appreciation for the bravery of sharing this sort of story, I also noticed that I felt a connection between me and others who had also embraced bravery and who had spoken stories that shame suggested should be kept quiet. I felt that there was space for me to belong to a community of concern that included others who had experienced carrying stories of shame. Freedman and Coombs (1996) write about these sorts of communities.

If people constitute their preferred selves by performing their preferred stories, then it is important that there be audiences for those stories. Once they exist, such audiences make up local subcultures which construct and circulate alternative knowledge— knowledge that provides new lenses through which to interpret experience. As preferred stories are circulated and shared in a subculture, *all* the participants in that subculture construct each other according to the values, beliefs, and ideas carried in that subculture's preferred stories. This whole process constitutes the kind of "insurrection of subjugated knowledges" about which Foucault (1980) wrote. Madigan and Epston (1995) propose the term "communities of concern" for such participant audience subcultures. (p. 237)

In witnessing myself speaking I recognised that I was connected to a community of concern that seeks to care for people who have been treated unjustly, a community that is open to listening to stories of unwanted experiences and a community who is willing to speak difficult stories in order that greater understanding might be available through those experiences being shared.

The significance of documentation

I also value witnessing myself through my story being documented via video and writing. The documenting, and specifically of the moments when I spoke about the unwanted sexual touching I had experienced as a child, signified the shift from this story being kept in my head unspoken, to it being said, heard and documented.

While it was difficult for me to read the words on paper, I appreciate the feeling of certainty that comes with having this story documented. I can revisit what I was able to speak, and I have a record of having had this conversation. Epston (1994) writes:

Conversation is, by its very nature, ephemeral. After a particularly meaningful session, a client walks away aglow with provocative new thought, but a few blocks away, the exact words that had struck home as so profound may already be hard to recall ... But the words in a letter don't fade and disappear the way conversation does; they endure through time and space, bearing witness to the work of therapy and immortalizing it. (p.112)

A significant step

Witnessing myself noticing shame was the difficult but necessary first leg of this journey. As I have described, I travelled from being in a place where I was unfamiliar with shame, blind to its influence on how I was performing the stories of my life, to a place where shame was up close and loud, challenging the ideas I held about myself and challenging the identities I claimed. Slowly as I pulled shame out of the shadows of my life and into the light I began to see the ways in which there were threads of shame influencing many areas of my life. Most significantly I began to examine the role of shame in my friendships with other women. Coming to a closer noticing of shame was interesting and exciting, painful and sad. While I was pleased to be

coming to these realisations I felt a sadness as I looked back and wondered what might have been different or possible if I had discovered this sooner. I wondered about the many subtle ways that shame might be having similar effects on others, covertly shaping the meaning they make of life. I also wondered how this knowledge of shame would shape my professional practice of counselling? How might this noticing of my own shame contribute to future counselling conversations?

CHAPTER SIX

Speaking

The stories we tell ourselves, particularly the silent or barely audible ones, are very powerful. They become invisible enclosures. (Griffin, 1992, p. 284)

This section pays attention to words, to language, and to how what was spoken in this research had an effect on the research and on me. Acknowledging layers of silence and layers of speaking I explore the effect of these layers on my life. I highlight and deconstruct the language used to speak about and tell stories of shame within this research. I focus on the ways in which language worked to unstitch me from the terrain of problem story and stitch me into preferred terrains of identity.

Finding a voice

Often, women are afraid of their own voices and the possible consequences of them. There is a gendered context that requires women and girls to not complain, to act satisfied, and to be happy and content. This makes it difficult to find space for the discontented or uncertain voice: It is driven underground, suppressed. Women and girls become very skilled at convincing others that all is well, when this is too often not the case. Externalising conversations can help women and girls see that they can move beyond internalized stories of the “good girl” or the “good woman” and the expectation that any performance of self that causes conflict or distress in others is unacceptable. (Brown, 2007a, p. 280)

At the outset of this journey I was somewhat aware of the limitations of speaking that I experienced in everyday life. However I experienced myself as poorly positioned to refuse or change the speaking positions available to me. I most noticed these limitations amongst my female peers. I found it difficult to speak my point of view in a discussion, often privileging another's knowledge over mine. Confrontation or even just discussions of difference would often result in me becoming silent, or experiencing vulnerability and nervousness before and after speaking. I began to see that what had developed was a fear about what my speaking would produce. The fear was that my speaking would produce rejection and disconnection.

There are aspects of the way I took limited speaking positions that fitted with my preferred way of being in relationship with others: I am conscious of not wanting to overpower others with my speaking, or to force my opinion on them. However as I began to explore this element with Jean I recognised that the layers of silence went beyond care and carefulness for others and had moved towards over-cautiousness and a policing of language that was negatively influencing my relationships.

'Never speak about'

I also became more aware of the stories that I had relegated to a 'never-speak-about' category in my memory. These were the stories that as they happened to me burned with shame. The exposure I felt as these events happened convinced me that those around me were able to see what these stories meant about me, about my flawed character. As a young person the idea of revisiting this shame in order to tell the stories again had seemed unthinkable. As a young adult I attempted to tell the story of unwanted sexual touching to my mother and later I thought I had spoken

about it to my husband, but now I learned from them that this story had not been recognised by either of them.

Wednesday 22nd June 2016

I came to realise that there was a gap in what I thought my mother and my husband knew about this event and what was actually known. On different occasions I had attempted to communicate this event to these two people, but have now come to understand that this communication was not received or understood in the way I had imagined it had been. In my mind I had given clues to these events from my past, perhaps I considered these clues to be openings to a line of conversation that I was considering might be possible. Perhaps I thought that these clues were 'enough information', all that the other person wanted to hear. I didn't push the conversation and the other person didn't ask me about it so this story went unsaid. Later as I began to speak with more purpose about these events both my mother and my husband say that this is the first time they have heard this story, and both had wonderings about why I had not spoken to them about this story sooner. This was interesting and confusing to me.

Reconsidering my attempts to communicate this story, I recognise that at the time I had attempted to tell the story I did not have the language that would have made it possible for me to fully explain it. I spoke in coded clues, and when these coded messages were not responded to I decided that either they had received the message and deemed it unimportant or they had received the message and deemed it too unpleasant, not something they wanted to talk about. This left me with the impression that while this story was consequential for me, it was less so for others,

this caused some tension for me when I decided that it would be this story I would use to examine my relationship with shame.

Telling a valid shame story

When I decided to study shame I was caught between two ideas. The first idea was that I thought it would be possible for me to study shame because I had a story of shame to tell, one that was valid enough. This thought came from the idea that shame originates from a specific traumatic event and since the story I had to tell had elements of unwanted sexual contact, 'an event that warranted shame', I deemed it to be a 'valid shame' story. As I entered into this study a second idea emerged. It is possible that this second idea was a layer of response to my previous attempts to tell this story. This layer was about the invalidity of my story.

Thursday 24th March, 2016 — (Before the layers of conversation with Jean)

The fear that my story will not be validated, that it is not severe enough, not worthy of counselling time and attention, not big enough to count, these thoughts invite shame.

Shame says: who are you to think this story counts when heaps of people have suffered much worse, you should just stay quiet. People will think you are stupid for worrying about it, for making it into a big thing

Leah says: this is exactly why it needs to be spoken, and that I trust others to sit with me in my vulnerability and to validate my fears and listen to my story without judging me for wanting to tell it.

This is an illustration of the way shame operated, trying to ensure my silence, working on both sides of the equation, suggesting that my story was either too

shameful to speak or not shameful enough to be valid. Either way shame promoted its stance that it's best if I just stay quiet. And yet my silence was not ensured. I had begun to stand up to shame.

With this newly emerging voice I began to anticipate the opportunity to speak my story to Jean. Holding firmly to the idea that speaking the story of shame from my childhood would be the best way for me to understand my relationship with shame I went into the layer one counselling conversation with a strong desire to do this. I carried the weight of the importance of speaking my story, and not just speaking it to anyone but speaking it in the context of a counselling conversation. The discourse of therapy, of counselling being a place where the listener to the story might make enquiries about the story, might investigate the story with me, was the expectant hope I took into this counselling setting. What transpired in our layer one conversation however, was that we spoke briefly about this childhood story at the outset of our conversation and we then moved to questions that focused on my present-day relationship with shame. I came away from that conversation curious about why I had not spoken more about the childhood story I had planned to speak. This curiosity highlighted two important aspects of this research, the first is my experience of reduced speaking rights when in the *client* position. The second is a tension about the weight of importance that is given to suppressed stories.

Speaking rights

In my everyday performance of speaking and more acutely when I was positioned as the client I experience myself not wanting to dominate or disappoint with my speaking. I am helped to understand this position by Weingarten (1998)

A third view of power locates it not in individuals or relationships but in the prevailing discourse. In this view, power is having the means to produce a consensus. Power becomes a function of the legitimacy of positions established by the discourse. (p. 7)

Taking this view of power and applying it to my experience of the counselling conversation with Jean I can see how prevailing discourses about therapy, and about giving voice to problem stories, positioned me to come into agreement with Jean about the direction the counselling would take. Located in the client position I was discursively positioned to come into consensus with Jean. I recognise that the discursive landscape I entered as I offered myself to the process of counselling as a client was informed not so much by modernist ideas about the expert therapist, but by narrative therapy ideas about stories being explored and more so about the therapist having an idea about where best to take the conversation. My hope was that there would be an intersection between my history and therapy.

As time progresses I begin to recognise that this positioning was preventing me from more deeply exploring the expectant hope I carried into the layer one counselling conversation. Even after the layer one conversation I was still closely bound to the idea that it would be through exploring the story of unwanted sexual contact that I would come to know more about shame.

The tension of the suppressed story

This leads to the second line of enquiry which is about the tension between giving space to or moving away from what might be called suppressed stories. At one end of the spectrum a therapist searches for a suppressed story, and at the other end the therapist deliberately steers the conversation away from such stories.

The gift of this research is the opportunity to recognise and acknowledge this tension. A tension that arose from the expectant hope I carried that I would be extended an invitation to have a particular story explored. Revisiting the transcripts of all three conversations, there is evidence of Jean holding this tension also. In both the layer two and three conversations we spent time discussing the way the layer one conversation had moved towards and enquiry about how shame was affecting me currently, rather than spending time with the story from my childhood. There was a moment during our layer three conversation when I was able to say to Jean that I experienced a “smidge” — as I described it to Jean — of disappointment that arose when the story I had come ready to tell was not explored beyond the words I had already given to it. But that was as much disappointment as I was able to express to Jean. At that time I was unable to explain to her the disappointment of having no explicit invitation to tell more of my story — as I had anticipated would happen in counselling.

Seeking to deconstruct the idea that an early story carries more authority or speaks of a more real self, Brown (2007b) writes;

Externalizing internalized dominant discourse often allows for suppressed or subjugated knowledge to emerge. However, along with White (1997, 2001) I

will argue that resurrecting the suppressed voice is not the discovery of the real, unencumbered self. As such it should not be privileged as natural or as providing an authoritative foundation. (pp, 177-178)

I agree with this argument. However I also want to offer that from the ~~client~~ position, bringing and speaking a suppressed story felt important. Perhaps the distinction lies in who is interested in having the story told. If the ~~client~~ is the person who brings the suppressed story to the conversation, hoping for the opportunity to have this story heard, then this is a worthwhile path for the counsellor to follow. However if the counsellor, while exploring a problem story, forces attempts to search for a suppressed story of influence in the hope that this might reveal a more genuine point of entry into the problem story, then this perhaps privileges the counsellor's ideas about what is important over the ~~client's~~ and might place the counsellor in a centred and influential position (Morgan, 2006) for longer than is helpful to the ~~client~~. Within this spectrum however there are many factors to consider, one being the weight of the importance a person is giving to being able to tell a particular story. Another being the discourses of psychology that suggest that 'trauma' must be 'healed' and that the path to this is catharsis. Jean and I discuss during the layer three conversation:

Layer Three - Monday 15th August 2016

J. I didn't, I don't have any hesitancy about going there [in our conversation] and if you had chosen to go into much more detail I would have um gone there with you,

L. mm

J. but I don't necessarily believe that everybody has to speak all the details, to kind of 'sick it up' if you like,

L. yip

J. so it's very much about, um my questions were invitations to make the connections with the present I guess, rather than to spend a lot of time in the past, and if you'd wanted to, I mean to talk a lot more about it there probably would have come a point where I would have thought about how do I interrupt this,

L. ah, right

J. but a lot of that would come from a sense of whether it was a well-rehearsed story, or a... one of Kathie's things (she says) is sometimes our job is to interrupt the problem story, if the story of this and how it was shaping you now was one that had been told and told and told, then I might well want to interrupt that, but I didn't get the sense that this was a story that you had told and told and told

L. mmmm

J. It didn't come out as a story that had been rehearsed by being told to too many people,

L. Yes, right,

I am interested in the effect of this part of the conversation on me. At first when Jean spoke these words I felt a pride in myself for not being able to be classified as a person who had 'over told' a problem story. Then later as I reread the transcript of this conversation I experienced myself being further silenced by this idea. I carry an

understanding of the position that I think Jean was expressing in looking out for and preparing herself to interrupt a problem story that might have taken up a place of prominence in a person's storytelling — to the detriment of the person. However the effect of these words was to inadvertently collude with the ideas I had that a problem story should be kept quiet. I felt that now that I had spoken my story that was it, it was done, I was now not allowed to tell it again as then it might be “told to too many people”. How many is too many people? How would I know if I had reached that point? Was four too many?

I join with Jean in wanting to trouble or disrupt the hold that a problem story might have in a person's life, and I hold this tension within my own counselling practice. How might I open time and space for stories to be heard and explored but also hold an awareness of when it might be appropriate to offer a question that disrupts the flow of a problem story? I also understand that at this stage in our research conversations Jean and I were speaking together as counsellors and as researchers, and as such she was speaking in hindsight, considering these positions in dialogue with me as a counsellor and as a researcher. However, positioned as a client, I noticed the silencing effects and the vulnerability of that position. I didn't want to be a person who had spoken a problem story too many times. And neither do I want to traffic in the idea that there is a limit to the number of times a story can be reasonably spoken. Freer (1999) says, “I am deeply interested in ways that social work practitioners and therapists such as myself can respectfully create ‘loud’ spaces where women's voices can be heard” (p. 133).

Saturday 17th December 2016

Because of the effects of a shame, which was essentially to trap a story inside me, the antidote to these oppressive forces might have been the encouragement to speak this story more, there was so much more to explore there.

It's not until now that I am able to speak this request, this desire to speak more about it.

And so the gift of our conversation is to recognise that I still have more I want to explore, that I am finding the ability to speak the things that have never been said. Even more than this, the gift of this experience has been to be in the other seat, to experience the power, to be in the hands of a counsellor and to experience the shaping forces of the conversation. To experience what it is like to not be in control or to have less say in how and where the conversation went.

This has contributed richly / immensely to my understanding of my responsibility as a counsellor, an invitation into care for how I shape a conversation, into taking a not knowing position, into decentering myself, not just in who the conversation is about, but what the conversation is about. In taking care to not be too editorial about how much space is given to a story, to fully explore a story, not because the story requires it, but because this might be experienced as validating.

Duvall and Béres (2007) write

As therapists, we adopt an open and curious stance in relation to the details of the person's story. We also maintain an active position to structuring a story

that will allow the person to access what was previously invisible to that individual in his or her own story. (p. 229)

This curious stance is, I believe, one part of the equation towards carefully considering how a story from childhood offered in counselling can be approached. Another part of the equation is holding an awareness of the relations of power within counselling relationships. Narrative therapy, in an effort to disrupt power imbalances, employs curiosity, subjunctive language, and a stumbling approach. Winslade and Hedtke (2008) write about their recollection of Michael White speaking about his appreciation for a stumbling approach.

He (Michael White) says too that he is drawn to a stumbling approach to practice rather than something that is too slick or formulaic. The value of this stumbling approach lies in asking a question in response to what a person has just said. To do this means taking the time to stumble around and find what to ask, rather than having a well-rehearsed question ready. (p. 75)

Narrative therapy also seeks to disrupt the power held by a problem story. One way that this can be done is by investigating the problem as a response. For example, anger as a response, silence as a response and shame as a response.

Shame as a response

Shame can be thought of not only as the effect of a problem or as a problem itself, but as an active response to a distressing event. Alongside a transcript of White's (2004) practice, he writes about a conversation in which he enquires about the presence of shame.

This experience of paralysis had clearly been significant to Julie, and although Julie did not say this, when she spoke of this paralysis I thought I detected a

sense of shame. In all of the stories that I had heard from Julie, this was the only one in which I thought I detected an expression of feeling, or affective tone.

So I asked her about this: 'Did I detect a note of shame in your voice when you were talking about your inability to act, about your inability to assist the child?' Julie said that she had never thought about it before, but that she supposed that it must have been shame — 'shame over letting the child down'. I wanted to know whether this was a mild shame or a moderate shame or a strong shame, hoping that it was strong or at least moderate shame. After some reflection, Julie said that she thought it must have been strong shame, although she hadn't realised at the time. I recall feeling quite enthusiastic about her conclusion that this was strong shame, because this indicated an opening for further conversation about what Julie gives value to in life. (pp, 48-49)

He further explains why he took the steps of asking Julie about whether there was shame attached to that story.

In the context of trauma, what people give value to is usually diminished by being demeaned and ridiculed, or totally disqualified. On account of this, people take measures to keep safe what is precious to them, and these measures usually involve secreting this away from others. (White, 2004, p. 49)

I take this account to mean that the stories that we feel could do most damage to what we value in life are the ones that we feel the most desperate need to keep quiet. As a response to an experience of trauma Julie felt that if others discovered she had not helped a child in the way she felt she would have wanted to, then they

would see her as someone who did not value keeping children safe, which was in direct opposition to what she deeply valued. I felt that if people learnt about a story of unwanted sexual touching then this would be something that turned them away from me, and because connection with others, especially other women is something that I deeply value I felt I needed to prevent people from knowing this aspect of my life.

As I approached my own experiences of shame in a way that sought to notice what I valued, I discovered this introduced a layer of purposefulness to an investigation of shame. I began to notice less fear when I experienced shame. Instead of stiffening myself to the shame and trying to shove it away and not acknowledge it, I approached shame with a 'why' question, why am I experiencing shame in this moment? What does this suggest to me about what I value, what do I feel is being threatened?

These questions allowed me to soften to the shame, to allow it to be, to come and to go. I found ways to acknowledge the shame and to allow it to be visible to me rather than trying to ignore it or hide it. I experienced this as witnessing myself and offering myself compassion in the moments of experiencing shame. I noticed that while my body still reacted to the shame with sick feelings in my stomach, tightening across my chest and an ache in my heart, I was better equipped to move beyond the paralysing effects of shame and towards finding words that allowed me to speak to myself about that moment of shame.

Stitching and unstitching

During this year, as Jean, Kathie and I moved through this research, we happened upon many different metaphors that helped me to bring understanding to the work.

One of the most resonant metaphors was of stitching and unstitching. This metaphor rose out of a desire to explain my experience of the counselling conversation with Jean. The image I had was of stitches being loosened and the seam holding two pieces of fabric together coming undone. The conversational space between Jean and I acted as a site where I experienced becoming unstitched from the problem story, or the problem story becoming unstitched from me. Simultaneously our conversation was working to stitch me together with a more preferred story. The importance of the simultaneous nature of the unstitching and stitching was so that I was not left hanging, unstitched and floating.

In her thesis investigating how Maori cultural knowledges come to contribute to Pākēha identities and counselling practices, Te Wiata (2006) also calls on the metaphor of stitching to write about connections between Māori and Pākēha. She writes about “making space for the telling of ‘stitching’ stories” (p. 10). I consider that this thesis about shame is a stitching story, I have been stitched into a connection with new knowledge and this new knowledge stitches me into a new way of performing my identity as a counsellor and as a friend.

Layer Two - Wednesday 3rd August 2016

L. I spoke to Kathie, we had a supervision meeting in-between this conversation and now, and um, the image that she gave me for how I described my experience of it was that the work and whether or not you were, whether or not you would think about it in this way, but the way that it made sense to me was you were un-stitching me, or breaking apart the stitches that I had to the problem, and re-stitching me into

the new alternative story, that all of those 'why not' question, all of that questioning, that was sort of

J. unpicking the bits,

L. teasing, unpicking and slowly easing me away, and then stitching me in on the other side, but that what, but I was still attached over here a bit, and that's why it was so difficult for me to come to some of those new understandings, but over time that work continued.

As our conversation continued Jean and I talked about the way she had structured her questions so that they circled around and around, covering the same ground, but each time revealing something slightly different. We talked about how this was effective in loosening some of the more difficult stitches. I noticed that small, answerable questions helped me to feel like I had available answers. This fits with White's (2007) ideas about scaffolding questions that "make it possible for people to incrementally and progressively distance from the known and familiar and more toward what it might be possible for them to know and to do" (p. 263). If we consider that shame was promoting silence, then silence threatened to return if I felt like I was not able to answer the questions I was being asked, if the reach was too far, the risk was I would be left feeling 'not up to the task'.

I experienced such a moment in the layer one conversation. Jean had asked me a question and I had misheard it. I did not have an answer to the question I thought she was asking me, and yet I was positioned to have an answer. This inability to produce the answer brought vulnerability and tears very close. When I later realised

that I had misheard her question I was relieved because not only did this release me from the expectation to have an answer for this question but it also released me from wondering why Jean had asked such a big question. This experience of vulnerability in relation to a question I was not well positioned to answer took me immediately to consider my own counselling, wondering about my contribution to vulnerability or perhaps shame in another. How might I address this in my counselling practice?

Wednesday August 17 2016

The politics of speaking

Speaking is a political act. Without power words will be omitted, exchanged, (made to be less forceful) silenced.

I am thinking about this in relation to both a counsellor and a person in conversation with a counsellor. And if I look first at the counsellor, there is a politics to the words chosen and to the way they are delivered. If a person does not feel they have a right to claim the position of 'allowed to say these things' then these things will not be spoken.

Seeking to learn about this tension in counselling, I am drawn to relational languaging. Bird (2004) writes:

Recognising both subjectivity and the potential for imposing meaning within a power relation in the endeavours of psychology, counselling, social work, psychiatry, and community work theory and practice, directed me towards a relational consciousness position. The relational consciousness position

which is created by relational language-making allows me to engage in a discovery process where the following occurs:

- The self is relationally constructed and contextually positioned.
- The presuppositions we hold are expressed relationally and re-searched rather than held as definitive taken-for-granted truths.

The process I use to support discovery is complemented by recognition of the power relationship inherent within the therapeutic relationship (Bird, 2000, pp. 128 - 136). I believe limited acknowledgement of this power relation creates the conditions where imposing meaning subjects people to experiences of powerlessness, blame, shame, categorisation and silence. (p. 11)

For Bird the emphasis is on shifting the use of language away from conventional English structures and towards relational languaging which seeks to speak in a way that foregrounds the relationship between the person and the thing that they are speaking about. Relational languaging aims for the development of consensual meaning between speakers in the hope that this might move the speakers away from binary descriptions and towards greater possibilities for exploration of what is being spoken. I believe that moving ever further towards relational languaging in my counselling practice will augment my desire to address the politics of speaking. A movement towards relational languaging requires a move towards witnessing one's own language, a move towards hearing how language is currently being spoken, and practising and hearing how language might be spoken more relationally.

Conclusion

Slowly, word by word, piece by piece, stitch by stitch this research project brings me towards a closer understanding of shame. In this section I have expanded on the ways that speaking had contributed to this movement. Language has been represented by speaking, by poetry, by transcripts and by video recordings. Each of these aspects of language has had a different influence on the meaning being made as I have journeyed with this research project. I have written about the bodily responses to preparing to tell my story to Jean, the differently nuanced effects of reading my story and watching myself speak it, the experienced of having my story documented and the richness of noticing my own poeticness. What I appreciate about writing this section is that it has drawn me towards a closer examination of the effects of positioning on speaking. From a reflective and reflexive stance I notice the effects of discursive positioning on how I was able to speak when called into the subject position ~~client~~ and I notice the effect of positioning on the way I perform my identity as friend. I now carry with me an understanding of positioning that has layers of personal experience folded into it and I bring this knowledge of my personal experience of positioning into my counselling practice. My hope is that this knowledge will inform the way I speak and the way I craft questions, my hope is that my speaking and my asking will offer spaces of opportunity for others to move into and from which they themselves are invited to speak and to ask questions.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Movement

It is the stories that persons have about their lives that determine both the ascription of meaning to experience and the selection of those aspects of experience that are to be given expression. It follows therefore that these stories are constitutive or shaping of person's lives. The lives and relationships of persons evolve as they live through or perform these stories.

(White, 1989, p. 7)

An expedition

This section is a travel log, a collection of the journeying stories that tell about significant moments in this research project. These are stories about shifts from less preferred to more preferred positions, stories about discovering previously unknowable pathways and stories about the migration of my identity (White, 2007) from a territory of diminishment to a land of augmentation. These are stories about lines of flight. Stories about finding cracks in the discourses of shame, of unwanted sexual events, of friendships, and of women's relationships. These are the stories of how I have seeped and wisped my way to a different terrain of understanding and living.

A different performance of the story

As I described in the chapter five, this journey of moving towards a closer understanding of shame and of moving towards a more agentic position in my relationship with shame began when I started to ask myself different questions about

my own experiences of shame. As I began this journey there were two important items that I carried with me. These were curiosity and self-compassion. The curiosity sustained me and the self-compassion comforted me, allowing soothing care to accompany me when the journey became difficult. This self-compassion became especially necessary when the path of this adventure narrowed, or became steep or bumpy. These were the treacherous sections of track, the places I had previously avoided. My thinking had been that if I could keep shame at arm's length by not acknowledging its presence then it would not affect me. However, after travelling down some of these more difficult paths I was able to see that not only was my 'arm's length' strategy not protecting me from shame, but it was also obscuring how shame was affecting my life.

Fear had told me that if I was to allow these memories from my childhood to be re-experienced, this would result in me being overwhelmed and swamped by shame. Instead what I experienced was a calling to action of the many resources I was as yet unaware that I possessed, resources which made it possible for me to compassionately witness myself in a way that made the exploration of shame possible. These resources included finding ways to speak to others about this journey I was on, calling together a community of concern who could witness me as I made this journey. I used writing as a way of investigating the experiences of shame I was calling forth from my memory. Writing became a way of questioning shame and the claims it made about the position it should take in my life. I accessed resources from my professional practice of counselling. I noticed myself externalising shame and becoming curious about the meaning I had made of early childhood events.

All of these resources flow from my understanding of narrative therapy. Narrative therapy has been my constant companion and my guide on this journey, a guide who has offered me a deeper, wider, more expansive way of understanding my experiences. Narrative theory offered a framework from which I could draw ideas about what I was experiencing. Conversely what I was experiencing made it possible for me to more closely understand narrative theory. It has been in the area of the performance of identity that this new understanding has been most noticeable.

Identity as performance

As I began to describe my experience of this journey I found myself becoming trapped by humanist or structuralist understandings of stories: that stories were inside of me and I needed to bring them out. Troubling this idea with other people offered a different understanding about stories. An understanding in which stories are taken up and performed. This brought me to a more experience-near appreciation of Bruner's (1986) landscape of action and landscape of consciousness as quoted by White (2007)

The landscape of action is the "material" of the story and is composed of the sequence of events that make up the plot (*sjuzet*) and the underlying theme (*fabula*). The landscape of consciousness is composed of "what those involved in the action know, think, or feel, or do not know, think or feel. (p. 78)

Layering my experience of encountering shame across these landscapes helped me to give an account of the way that I had carried stories of shame and performed them through my life. It helped me to understand how the meaning I had made of

these stories in the moments that they occurred, and within the context of my life shaped how I continued to perform my identity. I became better positioned to see that it was possible for me to re-address the meaning I had made of these stories. That by taking account of the context of the story, my age, the beliefs that surrounded me, the ideas about sexuality, I could trouble the discourses that had shaped the meaning I had made when I was ten. I could re-author (White, 2007) these stories, re-write the script for the performance of this story in my life.

Events happen in all of our lives that cannot be changed. People experience traumas and losses that cannot be undone. The ways in which these events are understood and interpreted, however, makes a considerable difference to their effects. For instance, if you believe you were subject to a particular trauma because it was 'your fault', because you have always been 'a loser' and that these sorts of events are going to continue to happen for the rest of your life, then this has a very different effect than if you believe what occurred was a singular, horrific, unjustifiable act of abuse or injustice. What sort of story-line an event is placed into makes a significant difference as to the effects of that event in a person's life. (Carey & Russell, 2003, p. 60)

One of the ways in which this journey has altered my relationship to shame is in how I now respond to shame. In the first section of this chapter I wrote about the slinky or the spring of shame, suggesting that when this spring collapsed it would heap all the shame stories from my life would together, binding them into an amassed compendium of shame. As this journey progressed I began to notice that as I re-told the childhood stories I had carried, they began to separate from each other. With

these stories becoming more singular I was more able to address them one by one, a much less distressing position from which to re-encounter them.

There was however something missing. Treating each story as singular, as disconnected didn't allow for a fuller account of how these shame stories were connected. Gradually, through conversation with Jean and Kathie, I came to a different position again. In this position time does not collapse, but neither are the stories disconnected. Rather now I see a thread of the performance of these stories that connects the past to the present. I see the way the performance of early shame stories threaded through my life, contributing to shame and to the meaning I was making of the events of my life.

A written account of my story

As this thesis has been constructed I have spoken often about the childhood story of shame I carried into this research project. I have not yet written this story here. I recognise that there are similarities between the vulnerability I experienced as I prepared to speak this story to Jean and the vulnerability I experience as I prepare to commit this story to paper, especially as this is destined for a public audience. This vulnerability was captured in this field diary entry:

Monday 4th July, 2016

It is the day of our conversation and I am noticing a nervousness surrounding me, I am aware of a tightness in my chest around my heart, just below my collar bones. I imagine myself speaking certain words, telling images that are in my head, stories and words yet untold, details untold. I am apprehensive

about this conversation. I wonder if this mingles with needing to get the video set up, making sure I capture this information. What will transpire?

Does this nervousness prevent people from coming to counselling?

I have also noticed I am distracted, my ability to focus onto anything wider than myself is limited.

This tentativeness has dictated how much and when this story has been spoken and written about. I recognise that my efforts to address the shame attached to this story have come a long way, but I also recognise that there are still threads of shame present, especially when I think about others reading my story. So again, as with Jean, I tentatively practice a new identity. I lean into vulnerability to tell my story:

Layer one conversation - Monday 4th July 2016

L. my memory is quite hazy but I remember quite clearly what I think is the second event, and I know it was the second because I remember, I'd gone to this person's house to stay for the night and it was a family that we knew and there was a girl and I know it was the second event because I lay there not wanting it to happen, and so that makes me think that it had happened before,

J. mm

L. and so I was lying on the ground next to her bed and she was up on the bed, that was when I was lying there not wanting it to happen but it did happen, well my memory of it is that she reached down and wanted to touch me and wanted me to touch her and I didn't want to, but that's what happened and I kind of vaguely

remember that there was sort of talking, but I can't remember that bit, and then later on I kinda remember another couple of times it happening in different places but that's the most vivid in my memory and so when I, I knew that I didn't want anybody else to know about it, and it made me feel really funny about myself, yeah,

J. can you tell me a bit more about that funny

L. yeah, it made me feel probably, it's hard for me to say that this was the only thing that made me feel different to other people, but this was something that kept popping up in my mind as ah an indicator that I was different to other people, ah different to other girls, but I desperately didn't want any of my close friends to know, yeah, because I thought that they would think differently about me.

The meaning I made of this event, that I was different, was produced by discourses of sexuality, and ideas about 'ok and not ok touching'. I carried the idea that this sort of event was not ok and I believed that it was due to some inherent flaw in me that this event occurred. I thought that if I was a different person this wouldn't have happened, that it was because of who I was that this unwanted event occurred. Weingarten (1998) writes about a client who was shrinking herself and her world in response to the abuse she had experienced.

Taking each item of self-restriction that she had mentioned, we tried to understand how the abuse was related to these arrangements. The internalized discourse — her self-talk that abuse had ruined her for life, that she was hopeless and bad — commanded her to separate herself from others

for fear they would discover her damaged condition. Soon, however, through an externalizing conversation, we were no longer talking about abuse. Like a train changing tracks, isolationist practices, not abuse, became the thing outside of herself that she could perform or resist. Isolationism was narrowing her range, geographically, socially, and emotionally; anti-isolationism might counteract this confinement. (p. 6)

I recognise a similar 'changing tracks' in the layer one conversation with Jean.

There was a point at which we were no longer talking about unwanted touching and instead we were talking about diminishment. We talked about the effect of the meaning I had made of this event, how it had influenced my interactions with others. As we talked I began to recognise that shame had persuaded me to diminish myself, suggesting that this was how I would access connection with others, "worthy" others whose identities had not been spoiled as I believed mine had been.

Layer One - Monday, 4th July, 2016

J. so you would have these relationships where you don't really ever challenge, or really ever express what you're thinking

L. no, you'd just kind of mould yourself so that you are really similar to the other person's thinking, [you would have] no unique perspective

J. would you ever just stop having your own ideas? would you find that you've moulded yourself so much?

L. yeah definitely stop having your own ideas, it's too dangerous to have your own ideas, yeah if it took me over completely

J. mmm, and what would that do to your relationships?

L. well, ha, see the trick is that it, that the shame and fear, tells me that that's what will make it really smooth, these people will like you, because you are saying exactly what they want to hear, which is what they're putting out. But

J. is that ok, because you might be right, people might like you for that

L. if that's what I experienced happening, but it's not,

J. why is it not

L. well because it's not what I experience happening,

J. so it doesn't work

L. doesn't work, no

J, if it did work would it be ok,

L. if it worked maybe it would be alright, oh yeah, yeah, it might be all right if it worked, ooh, what do I think about that, ah no, I don't know, I'm so used to it,

J. what would be missing?

L. me, I would be missing.

The conversational space created by this line of enquiry invited me to reconsider my position on self-diminishment. This was an important moment in our counselling conversation as this was the moment I changed my mind.

A story about changing my mind

I changed my mind about my willingness to continue to police my speaking. As policing my voice had been akin to policing my presence with others, this change of mind signalled a shift in how I might allow myself to be with others. It loosened the stitches that were holding me to a performance of my identity that was based on the fear of disconnection from female peers. With these stitches loosened I could begin to move towards being stitched into a more preferred performance of identity, into a re-authored story. A re-authored story that acknowledges the value I place on connection with other women, a story of finding ways to claim my worth.

Changing my mind was the beginning of this re-authoring, further re-authoring occurred when I heard the way my story had resonated with Jean. White (2004) writes that “the most powerful practice of acknowledgement that I know of involves the active participation of an audience...what is crucial in this work is that the responses from outsider witnesses are ‘resonant’” (p. 49). This section of transcript tells of this resonance as I interview Jean, researching what interested her in the layer one conversation.

Layer two - Wednesday 3rd August 2016

L. Why did you choose this piece?

J. The bit that stood out for me was that, just that little phrase about being diminished and being so diminished. At one part I said “and what would be missing” and you said “me, I would be missing”. That point caught my attention.

Jean explained that my story of a struggle with personal diminishment brought forth specific memories for her. White (2004), speaking about reverberations evoked in outsider witness participants says; “these reverberations touched on specific experiences of their personal histories, which had come into memory, and had lit up for them” (p. 50). For Jean the reverberations touched on a time from her childhood. She told me a story about a time in her life when she felt she needed to small herself down in response to the unpredictable anger of someone who was employed to care for her father.

Layer two - Wednesday 3rd August 2016

J. it was like the whole world hinged on me not being enough of a bother to cause that [life at home] to collapse. I dealt with that by just trying to be invisible and I guess that’s why it resonated with me, the sense that for you it’s about mainly making people like you and for me it was about making people not notice me. But a lot of the effects it’s had are quite similar, there’s this having to agree with everything, don’t argue because it might set off an argument or you know, where could that go. I’m not sure that the consequences could have been so easily disastrous as my mind at that time, when I was little, managed to create. Where’s that taken me? I think about what it does for me. On the one hand it helps me to recognise that in some areas I’ve really moved, managed to find ways to say “oh I could speak up”, but in other areas it’s really easy for me to be called back into that that 'put aside your own ideas and don’t be a bother'. It’s actually, it’s there, it’s a position that’s there and available.

The value of resonance was that it folded layers of meaningfulness into the experience of telling my stories. Initially meaningfulness came from being witnessed as I spoke; from having my story heard and responded to. New layers of meaningfulness and validation were folded into my life when Jean told me how and why my story had resonated with her. Freedman (2014) says

We make ourselves up as we go along in relation to each other. So not only are the stories we tell ourselves important, but the stories we tell others about ourselves and our lives, and the stories others hear us tell, and the stories that they tell about us, are important because they shape our identities. (p. 21)

Hearing Jean speak about how my story had invited her to re-engage with a story from her own childhood created a thread of connection between us. I no longer experienced myself as isolated. Instead I was invited into a community of care with Jean. Together, in community, we began to co-research (Epston, 1999, p. 137) the problem of personal diminishment. As Jean and I co-researched diminishment and as we co-authored preferred stories we opened new conversational spaces. Within these new spaces I noticed and began to reject the dividing practices (Foucault, 1982, as cited in Besley, 2002) that had suggested I place myself into a different category from other 'non-affected women'. These new spaces called me to take up a different subject position, a position that offered greater agency and speaking rights. In this new position I was able to stand together with Jean in the exploration of, and in opposition to, the problem named 'diminishment'.

This practice of co-researching and co-authoring was authenticating for me:

If our preferred story of who we are remains only a conversation in our own head, it will not have the sense of being 'real'. This sense of 'realness' or

'authenticity' only comes when our preferred stories are witnessed and responded to by a significant audience. (Carey & Russell, 2003, p. 67)

Jean was my significant audience. Her witnessing of me, her willingness to allow my story to resonate with her, and her responses to me authenticated my experiences. It gave me a different story to carry about vulnerability, one that spoke about movement being made possible by stepping into vulnerability. The meaning and knowledge that grew from our co-researching made it possible for me to move towards a preferred identity as a woman and as a friend. The performance of this preferred identity is a work in progress, and continues to emerge as I re-negotiate my relationship with vulnerability. I encourage myself to tell difficult stories, and to more freely speak my thoughts in conversations with other women. Practicing this preferred identity is made possible by, and contributes to, a reduction of shame in my life.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Discussion

I know experience cannot be captured fully; once it happens, it can only be interpreted from limited and partial perspectives. Nevertheless, it is important to be able to story ourselves, to have a story to tell, and to tell it as well as we can. These goals are facilitated by making ourselves vulnerable, considering the truth of our account from multiple perspectives and points of view, and keeping ourselves open to the evolving meanings of what we tell and write — its movement — even while having to “fix” the story for the moment. (Ellis, 2009, pp.15-16)

This section of the journey, of this hikoi, is taken up with reflection and contemplation. Following in the footsteps of Crocket (2004) who writes about the relationship she developed with her research, and Waters (2011) who wrote a moving letter of tribute to her research, I write about the ways in which my relationship with this research project has shaped and moved me. I offer what I hope amounts to a full enough account of this research journey so that the reader has a sense of the progression of my knowledge about shame and the ways in which I imagine this knowledge will contribute to my professional practice of counselling.

As an autoethnographer, I tell a situated story, constructed from my current position, one that is always partial, incomplete, and full of silences, and told at a particular time, for a particular purpose, to a particular audience. (Ellis, 2009, p. 13)

This is my situated story. Written in my 39th year, at the completion of my Masters of Counselling, for the purpose of coming to a richer understanding of aspects of my own personal story and my current lived experience, personal and professional — in order to serve my professional practice. This account is partial and incomplete and full of silences, at the same time it is whole and complete and full with the sound of many voices. Narrative therapy is the voice that sings most sweetly throughout this work — it is a song of justice and of hope, of restoration and connection. Through the framework of narrative therapy, I have made meaning of the events narrated in this research project.

Journeying with research

As I write this final chapter I have a sense of coming to the end of a journey. I picture myself walking down a road. This road brings me to the completion of this project and as I approach I have a sense of joy, invigoration, gratitude and relief. I think about how far I have come. Picturing myself back at the start of the walk, I marvel at the distance that has been travelled. I think about what I have learnt.

This research has required me to learn how to tell certain stories, stories of shame and stories of research. This project has also required that I learn how to tell these stories *in writing*. These story-telling requests necessitated a move beyond what was known and familiar to me and towards different territories of knowledge. In order to make this sort of move, the stitches that were connecting me to some of what was known and familiar to me needed to be cut or unpicked. Only then could I shift towards positions from which I could speak not only stories of shame, and of research but also alternative stories (White, 2007) about myself. It is these

alternative stories that I tell in this chapter. These stories feature me as a woman who is willing to tell difficult stories, they feature me as a researcher and as a writer. Carrying these stories I now perform these identities. The movement towards these new identities was set in motion by the questions I asked about shame and about research. These questions shaped the research curiosity that has carried this project along. My curiosity about what happens at the intersection of shame and narrative therapy.

The starting point

Early in this project, I decided that an ethical starting point for research of shame would be a closer look at my own relationship with shame. My hope was that by coming to a closer understanding of my own relationship with shame I might come to a closer understanding of shame for the benefit of my practice. I hoped to move to a more particular understanding about the experiences of shame for those who had been subjected to sexual abuse.

I began generating research data by documenting my experience of exploring my relationship with shame. At first I did not recognise the importance of what I came to call my 'informal field notes', however, as time went on I recognised that these notes held precious data; Important stories about movements in my understanding of my relationship with shame.

In order to perceive change in one's life — to experience one's life as progressing — and in order to perceive oneself changing one's life, a person requires mechanisms that assist her to plot the events of her life within the

context of coherent sequence across time — through the past, present and future. (White & Epston, p. 35)

My informal field notes provided such a mechanism, a way to notice movement, a way to witness myself. From witnessing myself I learnt three things about noticing shame. First, noticing shame took time, second, it took purposeful effort, and third, it was a struggle. I highlight these elements so that I carry them with me into my counselling. *Time* reminds me that movement is sometimes slow. *Purposeful effort* reminds me that sometimes noticing shame does not seem like the obvious thing to do, but is nevertheless an important option to keep in mind. *Struggle* reminds me that noticing shame is not an easy path to take. In the conversations I have with clients I will welcome and make space for time, effort and struggle as part of the process of counselling.

New knowledge about shame

I now carry an experience-near understanding of shame. This understanding allows me to see that shame prefers to remain below the surface, unrecognised, in a territory of taken-for-granted assumptions, expectations and rigid binaries of right and wrong, good and bad, worthy and unworthy. I know that shame is more able to survive in an environment of silence, silence about events that caused shame and silence about the presence and effects of shame. Shame suggests that remaining silent is a way of protecting one's identity. White's (2007) explanation of how problems come to be internalised helps me understand the move towards silence.

People come to believe that their problems are internal to their self or the selves of others — that they or others are in fact, the problem. And this belief only sinks them further into the problems they are attempting to resolve. (p. 7)

Believing that they are the problem, people attempt to regulate or monitor themselves, policing their behaviour and their speaking, so as to minimise the visibility of their perceived flawed selves to others. Narrative theory turns to Foucault to understand this sort of self-monitoring on behalf of some standard or other through ‘normalising judgement’:

Modern systems of power encourage people to actively participate in the judgement of their own and each other’s lives according to socially constructed norms (as an outcome of which it is determined that people’s actions reflect degrees of inadequacy, abnormality, insufficiency, incompetency, hopelessness, ineffectualness, deficit, imperfection and worthlessness). (White, 2002, p. 43)

I experienced the silencing effects of shame in my own life. Convinced by shame that the events of unwanted sexual touching meant that I was abnormal and imperfect I concluded that it was due to a deficit of my character that these events had happened, that I was flawed and less valuable than others as a result of my experience. Accepting these assumptions as truth, I attempted to protect my identity by remaining silent about this event.

This need for secrecy required me to police myself by monitoring my behaviour and speaking around others, especially other women. I found this sort of self-policing to be difficult and tiring work. Despite my best efforts, I continued to feel that I was saying and doing the wrong things, failing to perfect this policing. Shame convinced

me that this failure to adequately police my behaviour was further evidence of my flawed character. These were the conditions in which shame flourished: taking over responsibility for making meaning of my value as a person.

I propose that shame could be seen as a response to a perceived failure to live up to normative discursive expectations. Therefore in order to come to a different position within a relationship with shame it is necessary to explore, through deconstruction, the normative discourses that are constituting people's lives. Walther and Carey (2009) speak about this sort of movement as promoting personal agency.

If we wish to promote a sense of personal agency in people's lives, and support them to live a range of possibilities, including, at times, those possibilities that are outside of normative discourses, then we need to notice and take a position on the relationships of power that are inherent in the operations of the unnoticed 'truths' of normative discourse. We would also be interested in alternative notions of self which support us to adopt this position.

(p. 3)

A fear of shame had prevented me from recognising the position of influence that shame had taken up in my life. I was operating within the normative discursive assumptions that suggested that the unwanted events of my childhood and the difficulties I experienced in my relationships with other women were due to inherent flaws in my character. When I began to deconstruct these assumptions, a different position became available to me. A position that made it possible for me to refute the suggestions shame made about my character and to re-assesse the influence I

would allow shame to have on the performance of my identity, especially my identity as a friend.

Folding new knowledge into my counselling practice

I now carry the idea that threads of shame may be woven into much of what people bring as problems to counselling. These threads could be seen as shame as a response to perceived failure, shame as a response to abuse, or shame offered on the terms of normative discourses that position many people, especially women, as 'not good enough'. I hold the idea that for some, these threads of shame have come to be woven into the everyday performance of the stories of their life, having an effect on the position calls available to them within relationships.

Acknowledging the possibility of these threads of shame stitches me closer to curiosity. In narrative therapy the idea of respectful curiosity is widely espoused:

A narrative way of working invites the counsellor to take up the investigative, exploratory, archaeological position. Counsellors are invited to express interest and curiosity in the preferences of clients by seeking an awareness of their moment-to-moment experiences. (Monk, 1997, p.25)

Curiosity moves a counsellor tentatively forward, it heightens the ears for words or phrases that offer an opening into a closer discovery of the life of the problem or into the exploration of an alternative story. Bird (2000) describes how she proceeds:

When I am drawn towards an idea, theme, word, experience, I hold it as a tentative support for the enquiry. I attempt to put to one side any psychological theories or compete hypotheses in order to construct a question that promotes exploration. Even though I sometimes have a sense of people's

(clients') response to this questions, I make myself available to the possibility of a different response. (p. 14)

In the context of this particular research project, the words and phrases I now listen carefully for are ones that suggest that there might be threads of shame associated with the problem.

I demonstrate this intention to bring a curiosity about shame into a counselling conversation by giving an imagined example from practice.

I imagine myself in counselling conversation. The person who has come to consult me is Jill. This is the third conversation between Jill and me. Our work before now has been about her recent separation from her husband of 10 years. Jill and her husband Alex have a daughter Jessie who now lives with Jill. On this occasion Jill begins our conversation by expressing anger about notices from Jessie's school about head lice. I ask Jill about the anger she experiences and she tells me that when she gets these notices it makes her feel exposed. She feels like the school is looking at her and judging her for being a sole parent. She says that it feels like people must think she is a bad parent who can't keep her daughter clean.

As I listen to Jill's description of the anger she experiences and the feelings that accompany the notices from school I am drawn to noticing the discursive conditions of sole parenting, and the binaries of 'good and bad parents', and 'clean and dirty children'. Normative discursive expectations such as good parenting and clean children can often lead to ideas of failure which might bring shame for those for who sense that they are outside these expectations. I become curious as to whether

shame is contributing to the problem of anger that Jill is speaking about. In our conversation I might ask a question like:

Sometimes when I have been talking with other people about anger we have come to discover that the anger isn't acting alone, that hiding in behind the anger there is shame, shame that makes them feel stink about themselves, and that comes out as anger or as blame, and so I suppose I'm wondering whether you think there might be the possibility that shame is also contributing to this problem?

I begin this question by connecting Jill's experience to other people's. I want to suggest to Jill that she is not alone in struggling with the anger that emerges when she feels exposed and judged. I am also keen to convey the idea that shame will try to conceal itself by 'hiding' behind anger. I use narrative therapy's externalising language (White, 2007) to 'speak' a separation between Jill and the problem, to offer Jill a position of inquiry from which shame and anger can be objectified. My hope is that my inquiry about shame might invite Jill to become curious about shame, that if shame is involved in this problem of anger then it might offer her a place to begin to speak about shame. I imagine a co-researching of shame and anger, together searching for the cultural and historical contexts that give rise to the problems she is facing. White (2007) explains that "externalising conversations make it possible for people to unravel some of the negative conclusions they have reached about their identity under the influence of the problem" (p. 26). Exposing shame and anger to this sort of deconstructive enquiry might allow for an unravelling of the conclusions Jill has come to about her identity as a mother.

I recognise that proposing a counsellor-led introduction of shame into the conversation could be viewed as the counsellor privileging their own ideas. However I weigh this consideration up against the knowledge that left to its own devices shame will not make itself readily seen or known, and that its apparent absence does not mean that it is not having an effect. As I have illustrated, the tentative introduction of the possibility of a conversation about shame has the possibility of creating spaces from which threads of shame may become available to be noticed and explored. Once noticed, these threads of shame can be further explored with the hope of discovering cracks in the wall of silence behind which they hide and exert control of a person's life, cracks through which a person might send their voice, speaking themselves beyond the wall of silence that shame has built, speaking themselves into a different territory of identity and into a different performance of the story.

And so the first recommendation I make to myself as a result of this research project:

- 1) Hold in mind the possibility that shame is involved somewhere in the problems that people bring to counselling.**

New knowledge about narrative therapy

This research has stitched me into new understandings of narrative therapy. These understandings are not new to narrative therapy, but are new to me, arising out of the processes of this research. These understandings became available as I wrote about the meaning I was making from the experience of witnessing myself in the client position. As each draft of writing emerged, was reviewed, discussed and rewritten, I was stitched closer and closer into different knowledge about narrative

therapy. I focus on how this new understanding of narrative therapy influences the position I take as a narrative therapist. I focus on vulnerability, witnessing and hospitality as these are the layers of new understanding that resonate most significantly with me, and that I anticipate will most strongly influence my ongoing counselling practice.

Vulnerability

Prior to undertaking this research project I had become skilled at steering myself away from situations in which I might experience vulnerability. I protected myself from the possibility of being hurt or shunned by deciding to not 'put myself out there', to not make myself visible. This decision was based on the fear (produced as an effect of shame) that if I 'put myself out there' I would be turned away. And so I kept myself in. While this seemed like a good idea, the danger of keeping yourself in is that this also leads to disconnection. By protecting myself from the possibility of being hurt, I was also protecting myself from the possibility of connection. In this way 'keeping myself in' increased the shame in my life as it seemed to confirm the fears I had that I was not worthy of connection.

These threads of shame, fear and vulnerability were invisibly woven through my life. Deciding to engage in a counselling conversation in which I would speak about the unwanted sexual touching that occurred in my childhood began the process of touching on these threads of shame, fear and vulnerability, tracing these threads with my finger, seeing these threads with narrative eyes.

With narrative eyes I began to understand vulnerability through the concepts of discourse and positioning theory. I recognised that the stories I had chosen to bring to the counselling conversation were stories that positioned me as within the discourses of 'tainted by unwanted sexual experience', the suggestion being that young girls who had experienced unwanted sexual touching were marred by the experience, different as a result of it. The discourse called me to recognise myself as being less likable than others because of this experience and therefore less worthy of connection. I now recognise that layers of vulnerability were folded through the way I performed this identity of 'less worthy'. Fear of vulnerability restricted my speaking with others, and this fear prevented me from requesting that others value me.

Taking the step to engage in a counselling conversation was a step in a different direction, a step away from a fear of vulnerability, a step towards an embrace of vulnerability. This step towards counselling was a step that required me to speak my stories to another person, to reveal what I believed were my inadequacies. Taking this step meant that I was asking to be witnessed, to be seen, and this invited vulnerability.

Experiencing this vulnerability I now ask: how can I translate this knowledge of client vulnerability into the way I perform my identity as a counsellor.

Recognising vulnerability

As a counsellor I am in the privileged position of being invited to bear witness to people as they tell the stories of their lives. I encourage myself to remember that sometimes these are stories that have never been spoken or explored before and while my heart may have had some practice at how to receive these stories, the lips

of the person who is speaking may not have had the opportunity to become practised at telling.

I offer to myself the memory of feeling like I had failed to adequately tell and explore the story I felt I was supposed to tell. I understand this feeling by exploring the discourses of therapy that suggest that a person has to 'tell the whole story' or 'get it all out'. I want to remember that if I, a person who is familiar with counselling, was influenced by this discourse then there is the possibility that others might be carrying this idea into counselling also. With this in mind I encourage myself to be prepared to balance a person's desire to fulfil an expectant hope that they will have the opportunity to speak their whole story, with allowing them to also feel free to not have to speak a particular story, or a particular aspect of a story. I want to offer a space where stepping into vulnerability is a safe option, where a person comes to trust that my heart is open to hearing the stories that their lips are beginning to find ways to tell.

Witnessing people with compassion

I now carry a much more defined identity as a witness to people as they tell difficult stories. This identity of witness invites me to consider the ways I choose to respond to people as they speak themselves to me, and is built on the hope that if the person experiences themselves being witnessed with compassion they might come to be able to witness themselves with compassion. Weingarten (2003) writes:

Some who have lost their capacity to witness themselves are fortunate to meet others who are dedicated to restoring the capacity to witness even to those who have endured unimaginable suffering. They do so by

communicating their profound commitment to try to imagine what cannot literally be imagined and by acknowledging that what they suffer from imagining what the other has suffered in no way compares to the suffering itself. (p. 152)

While Weingarten's focus here is on "unimaginable suffering", nonetheless, I take the spirit of her work to consider my responsibilities as a witness. As a witness I choose to make myself available to engage in conversations about difficult stories. I imagine myself responding in a way that acknowledges the difficulty of telling these sorts of stories, the possible vulnerability, shame and fear that accompany the telling of this story. Weingarten (2003) writes about different witnessing positions and the position I hope to take up is one of "aware and empowered", aware of my position as a witness, aware of my own responses to trauma and to witnessing, and recognising any power I have to act. Weingarten (2003) cites Mandela as being a prime example of a compassionate witness, "one who is aware and takes action in relation to what he witnesses for the purpose of transforming, not exacerbating, violence" (p. 33). My hope is to compassionately witness the people who come to me for counselling. I hope this might act as an antidote to shame. And that the experience of being seen and heard in an authenticating way might restore to a person a sense of their own loveliness, a sense of their value and of their worthiness of connection.

Offering hospitality

The hospitality I speak about here is concerned with a recognition of the politics of counselling relationships. A recognition that both the client and the counsellor are shaped by counselling discourses which often privilege counsellor knowledge over client knowledge. This is hospitality that welcomes another into the space of the

conversation as a cherished guest (Aman, 2006, p. 4), as someone who brings valuable knowledge to the conversation. Drewery (2005) writes:

I prefer the metaphor of hospitality for strangers, which enables us to see and perhaps deal more clearly with the power valences involved in a contextualized relationship of care. In addition, this metaphor does not presume that we necessarily know what will count as care in any particular meeting of strangers, only what the offerers of hospitality count as care; and more importantly, the notion of hospitality invites a sense of space, and an ongoing relationship with place and cultural context. It also begins with an assumption of difference. (p. 309)

This hospitality invites both client and counsellor into a relational stance of co-authoring in which both “counsellor and client will achieve shared meanings and coordinate their relationship according to their mutual meaning-making” (Winslade et al, 1997, p. 55).

Hospitality also means that I will take responsibility for the conversation. I accept the role as host, and as such it is my duty to provide not only care and witnessing, but also direction and opportunity. Here I am thinking about the many diverse resources that the host of the conversation might offer. Specifically for the context of shame I am thinking about definitional ceremonies (White, 2007), involving processes where witnesses are invited to listen to a conversation between a counsellor and a client. The significance of recruiting an audience to witness a person's development is explained here by White (2007):

It was the audience response to the stories told and performed in these forums that was verifying of these stories. It was the audience's

acknowledgement of the identity claims expressed in these stories that was authenticating of these identity claims. It was the audience recognition of these stories that so significantly contributed to the community members' achieving a sense of feeling at one with their claims about their lives. (p. 183)

As the host of the counselling conversation it is my responsibility to consider opportunities for practices that augment the conversations between the counsellor and client. Narrative therapy offers many ways to do this such as therapeutic letters that follow up on a counselling session (White & Epston, 1990), rescued speech poems that capture and collate the client's words (Speedy, 2005), letters, reports and certificates co-authored by the counsellor and the client.

To maintain the practices of embracing vulnerability, of witnessing and of hospitality in my counselling practice, the second recommendation I give to myself is;

. 2) Hold in mind a consideration for how it is to be positioned as a client.

New knowledge about research

Emerging from this research I now claim three identities that were not available to me when I began. I claim an identity as a researcher, as a writer, and as a woman who is willing to embrace vulnerability and to speak difficult stories. It was through practicing these identities that I have come to be able to claim them. I started by performing the actions associated with the identity. For example, I practiced research by keeping a research diary of my thoughts, I practiced writing by crafting sentences and paragraphs into sections of a thesis, and I practiced speaking difficult stories by speaking in ways that I had restricted myself from doing before. Gradually I started to

feel that these actions were me. That as I performed myself as a researcher, a writer and a speaker of difficult stories I noticed an increased congruence between the performance of these identities and my lived experience. Through the practice of performing the actions of research, writing and speaking I claimed the identity of these actions.

Claiming the identity researcher

Coming to closer, richer description of myself as a researcher has expanded the ways in which I think about the metaphor of counselling. As I have worked to produce this thesis, layers of the experience of performing research have been folded into my life and into this thesis. These layers allow me to claim the identity researcher, and from this position I can now see how aspects of the work I do as a counsellor are similar to the work of research. Aspects such as the investigatory pose of externalising conversations and the curious stance of re-authoring conversations. Holding in mind the benefit of researching the stories of my own life, I want to offer this possibility to others by inviting them to become co-researchers.

The term co-researcher originated in the work of Epston (1999), and here he explains why he chooses this metaphor.

I chose to orient myself around the co-research metaphor both because of its beguiling familiarity and because it radically departed from conventional clinical practice. It brought together the very respectable notion of research with the rather odd idea of the co-production of knowledge by sufferers and therapist. What made this possible, in the first instance, was a fairly thorough-

going externalising conversation, one in which the problem was a problem for everyone - and here I included myself. (pp, 141-142)

Co-researching invites a person to take a critical view of the problems they are facing. It brings what Sinclair and Monk (2006) describe as “discursive empathy” (p. 334) to the conversation. This is empathy that “involves demonstrating sensitivity to the larger cultural backdrop of our lives, as well as the lives of our clients” (p. 334). Together the counsellor and the person they are working with can begin to “map the influence of the problem” (White & Epston, 1990, p. 42) in the life of the client by engaging in externalised conversations (White, 2007) that allow for a consideration of the contextual environment that the problem inhabits. From a curious research position there may be opportunities for a person to recognise the relationship that has formed between themselves and a problem, this might open opportunities for a stance to be taken about their position within this relationship and for movement to occur. In this way co-researching is a path to increased agency. This quote from Davies (1991) about agency highlights how I see this occurring:

Agency is never freedom from discursive constitution of self but the capacity to recognise that constitution and to resist, subvert and change the discourses themselves through which one is being constituted. It is the freedom to recognise multiple readings such that no discursive practice, or positioning within it by powerful others, can capture and control one’s identity. (p, 51)

My hope is that counselling as co-researching will address the power relations that is inherent in the therapeutic relationship. Lerner (1999) writes that “the therapist has a power that is invested by society as a representative of technology and expertise,

but the ethical stance towards the other balances this hierarchy, tempering the violence” (p. 47). Co-researching invites a person to recognise themselves as a knowledgeable partner in counselling. Winslade, Crocket and Monk (1997) write that “if we want people to know that we support them in taking up opportunities for agency in their own lives, we need to offer them genuine agency in the relationship they have with us” (p. 56). Co-researching is one way of moving towards this sort of genuine agency within the counselling relationship.

Claiming the identity writer

My identity as a writer was not well developed prior to this research project. Now, I embrace writing as a means to thinking. Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) write:

Thought happened in the writing. As I wrote, I watched word after word appear on the computer screen — ideas, theories, I had not thought before I wrote them. Sometimes I wrote something so marvellous it startled me. I doubt I could have thought such a thought by thinking alone. (p. 970)

Through the practice of writing — and writing autoethnographically — I have come to appreciate that writing does not simply document already-complete thoughts, rather it brings the thoughts into being. Carrying this idea into my counselling practice brings life to the practice of producing narrative documents and in particular to find ways to offer opportunities for the person I am working with to write themselves into new knowledge. In her thesis on the co-production of a literary therapy Pentecost (2006) writes

From single or thinly-storied to thickly and multi-storied, the talk of counselling and of research worked together with writing to produce texts, and to produce

writers, co-researching possibilities and “a range of spaces to stand within the landscape of our lives” (Speedy, 2005a, p. 72). (pp. 151-152)

Claiming the identity writer offers me a position from which I can weave talking therapy with a literary therapy. I want to offer conversational and written opportunities for the production of new knowledge. White and Epston (1990) write about “a storied therapy” (p. 84), exploring the narrative metaphor through written documents. These might be documents written by the counsellor to the client, written by the counsellor to significant others in the client's life, written by the client as a letter to themselves or as a letter to others who might be facing the same problem as they did. Other forms of writing that might be helpful are forms that specifically invite the client to be the lead author of the document. Such as the client documenting thoughts on the whiteboard as we talk in counselling, poetic documents (Speedy, 2005), either co-authored during our counselling time or written outside of the counselling appointment. A personal diary or journal (see Thompson, 2004), or perhaps a letter to the problem or a letter to a person that is written in the knowledge that it will remain unsent (Ryle, 2004; Thompson, 2004).

Extending the claim I make to the identity ‘writer’ increases the confidence with which I introduce written aspects of therapy into my practice of counselling.

Claiming the Identity woman who embraces vulnerability and tells difficult stories

Embracing vulnerability in the way I speak myself to others and in my professional practice of counselling, and recognising myself as a woman who is able to tell difficult stories, is the movement that has most profoundly impacted the day-to-day performance of the stories of my life. As I said above, the movement towards this

identity has shifted my relationship to curiosity. It has also allowed me to make different meaning from my interactions with other women. I no longer accept shame's attempts to divide me from other women. I reject thoughts of judgement and difference. Instead I bring myself to my relationships with women from a differently positioned sense of who I am. This new position offers me greater speaking rights within my relationships with women and offers me a different way of seeing myself in these and other relationships.

The movement towards this new position of vulnerability was made possible through the practice of witnessing. Being witnessed with compassion by Jean in our counselling meeting (layer 1) and in the layer 2 and 3 conversations, and by Kathie during the process of this research has brought me to a closer understanding of the ways I can witness myself as a woman, as a friend. Weingarten (2003) writes that "in all instances the ability to witness the self is linked to witnessing by others. Honing our ability to witness others is, therefore, something we can all do that actively affects the transformation of violence" (p. 152). Recognising how important vulnerability and witnessing were in making possible the movement in my own relationship with shame, I now hope to offer this to others through my professional practice of counselling. This gift of witnessing has stitched me into the new identities I now claim and I carry this gift of witnessing forward to the people whom I will meet in my counselling practice. I carry an embrace of vulnerability and a willingness to not only tell difficult stories but to also hear them.

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Appendix 1: Letter to Jean

Hello Jean

Thank you for your willingness to be involved in this research project so far. I am writing to keep you informed about how this research is taking shape, and to take another step in negotiating with you your participation in the project, so that you will be in a position to give informed consent.

I have submitted the research proposal and this has been accepted so I am now formally enrolled. I am now in the process of submitting an application to the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee for approval.

In this application I have outlined the way in which you were invited to participate in this research project and have included the following outlines of how the research will be undertaken. Can you please read over the following proposed outline and give me any responses you may have about these. Once we are agreed I will submit a copy, of this letter that is our agreement about the research project, to the Ethics Committee.

Following this you and I will have a meeting to discuss the project, and clarify our shared intentions. We can negotiate the content of this letter and make changes if needed. When we are happy with this letter I will ask you to sign it indicating you give informed consent to work with me on this project.

There will be time set aside prior to our data generating meetings to work on refining the questions that will be used in the layer 2 and layer 3 conversations as set out below. My intention is that we will use Interpersonal Process Recall questions modified by us together to fit with our narrative understandings, and the purposes of this research.

Data Generation: Video recorded conversations.

The proposed structure for information gathering is as follows:

Layer 1: A counselling conversation in which I am the client and you are the counsellor.

Layer 2: Together you and I will watch selected segments (chosen by you) of our initial counselling conversation and I will interview you using modified Interpersonal Process Recall (IPR) techniques, along with narrative curiosity, to learn about your experience of the first conversation.

Layer 3: Together you and I will watch selected segments (selected by me) of our initial counselling conversation and you will interview me using IPR techniques, along with narrative curiosity, to learn about my experience of our initial conversation

Via this letter I am seeking your consent to video record these three layers of conversation.

Time commitment

In the ethics proposal I have given the following indication of what the time requirements from you will be. Can you please consider these time allowances and let me know if you would like them altered in any way.

Set up and confirming possible IPR questions and final informed consent meeting - 1 hour

Layer 1 - 1 hour

Preparation for layer 2 - 1 hour

Layer 2 - 1 hour

Layer 3 - 1 hour

Reading transcripts - 2 hours

Debrief and review meeting to check out my analysis - One or two meetings of 1 hour each.

At this point I wish to acknowledge the time commitment you are choosing to give to this research project. I am very grateful for your willingness to work with me in this research and I hope that there are ways that this work will also contribute to supporting your own practice and professional development.

Your agreement to participate in this research is voluntary basis, as such there are rights you have as a participant.

The right to decline

I am proposing that in order to protect your right to decline to participate in this study we will hold an initial informed consent / agreement meeting as outlined above. At this meeting I will ask you to sign this informed consent letter. As well as this, I suggest that a period of seven days following our initial Layer 1 conversation will be sufficient for you to state any wish to not continue to be involved in this study. You would also be welcome to contact Kathie Crocket, my research supervisor, within this time to let her know that you wish to discontinue your involvement. If you withdraw I will not use any of this research material in the study.

If I do not receive notice of your wish to decline after seven days, I will be in contact with you on the eighth day following the initial conversation to schedule a time for us to undertake our Layer 2 conversation. I will then arrange to send you a transcript of our layer one conversation.

The right to withdraw data

To protect your right to withdraw data, I will provide you with a transcript within two weeks of each recorded conversation. I suggest seven days following the transcript being given to you from any of our conversations to inform me of any data that you do not want to be used in the study. You may also amend any wording within the transcripts within these seven days.

The right to withdraw yourself

I would like to discuss with you at our set up meeting my proposal that once this study reaches layer 2 and 3, your right to withdraw is limited to withdrawing of data - unless there is any unforeseen circumstance, in which I propose we negotiate the situation with the support of Kathie Crocket as my research supervisor.

Can you please let me know how these suggestions would work for you. Are the time periods adequate?

Anonymity

We have previously discussed identifiability and your preferences. This is still a subject that we can have further discussion about. If you wish to remain anonymous then we can agree on a pseudonym to be used to protect your privacy as far as possible. This is a sensitive project, and if you choose anonymity I will take care not to identify you when speaking informally or formally with others about this project. You are free, if you wish to speak about the project and your participation. However, I would ask that you first discuss this with your professional supervisor to review any unintended or unforeseen effects for you that disclosure might bring.

If you choose to be identified in the project that could be appropriate as it would give you acknowledgement for your significant contribution to my project. Again, however, there could be unintended or unforeseen effects of disclosure, so I would appreciate you reviewing these with your professional supervisor prior to your decision. You are also welcome to discuss this aspect of the project with my research supervisor Kathie Crocket if you wish.

Confidentiality

All of the recordings that are made for this research and the transcripts of these recordings will be stored on a password protected computer and will be kept for five

years as per the requirements of the University of Waikato. As we have discussed I would like to audio and video record our layer 1-3 conversations. The transcripts will be seen by my research supervisor, Kathie Crocket.

Conflict of interest

A potential conflict of interest arises when we consider that for the purposes of this work you are making your practice available to research. Burman (1992) writes of the tension of researching the professional practice of those we respect. I will work carefully with you and in research supervision to be aware of this potential conflict of interest. If you have any thoughts about this matter or have other conflicts of interest that you think we should consider please let me know.

Dispute resolution

If a concern arises can you please first contact me. If we are unable to resolve the difficulty together, please contact Kathie Crocket as my university research supervisor..

The final thesis will be available on the University of Waikato Research Commons. I am also happy to print you a hard copy to read. The research project materials may also be used for publication and / or professional presentation.

I will be in touch to discuss with you a suitable venue for us to meet. The MCouns counselling room TT407 is available, and there may be other venues acceptable to us both.

Leah's contact details:

Leah Gillanders

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012 168 0247

Research supervisor contact details:

AProf Kathie Crocket

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This letter forms the basis of informed consent for this research project and as such it can be shaped so that it clearly represents what you are consenting to. I am very open to any suggestions you have about what is being proposed here.

Warm regards

Leah Gillanders

Informed Consent :

I agree to be video/audio recorded for this study

Yes

Within this study I choose to (please delete one) use my own name / use a
pseudonym

I _____ agree to participate in Leah's study on the terms
outlined within this information letter, to which we have both agreed.

_____ / _____ / _____

—

Sign

Date

Appendix 2: Indicative lines of inquiry

What do you remember thinking or experiencing at this point in the session?

Were there any other thoughts also going through your mind / or anything else that you were experiencing?

Was there any particular theory or model of practice that was somewhere (background / foreground) that you can now see you were calling on as you engaged in this portion of the conversation?

Were there ideas from your own experiences that you were calling on as you engaged in this portion of the conversation?

Can you remember the thoughts that lead to you asking that question?

Were there different questions that you had considered asking but didn't?

If there were, what was your thinking about why you choose not to ask these other questions?

Were there other directions that you were considering offering as possible conversation points?

Did you notice experiencing any particular feeling in this portion of the conversation?

What was your experience of how I was experiencing this conversation?

- What was happening to you in this moment?
- How did you feel when you
 - Asked that question
 - Listened to that story
 - Spoke about this experience

What were you experiencing as you listened to me speak in this portion of the conversation

Given another chance were there any questions that you would have liked to ask

What do you think might have been the difference if you had asked this question

Given another chance were there any different ways you would have wanted to respond to my story?

What do you think might have been different if you had responded in this way?

Appendix 3: Possible flow - Layer 2

Jean chooses the section of work, Leah leads the inquiry

1. Why choose this piece?
 - a. What interested you about this portion of our conversation?

2. What would you say were the thoughts and experiences from a practice perspective that might have been informing your practice in this section?

3. Was there a connection with any particular theories that you have identified as you consider this part of the conversation?

4. Are there any particular practices (questions, directions) that you experience yourself using, or were considering using during this section?

5. Was there anything from your own personal experience that was informing what was happening in this section?

6. What was your experience of how I was experiencing this section?
 - a. What were you noticing about me?

7. Was there any movement or learning for you from this experience?

Appendix 4: Possible flow - Layer 3

Leah chooses the section of work - Jean leads the inquiry

In this layer the inquiry is about the counselling, not the personal work.

1. Why did you choose this piece

2. Thoughts and experiences producing the telling and also being produced by the telling in this section

3. What is implicit and explicit in this section, what has been said and were there elements to this story that remained unsaid
 - a. If yes, why?

4. How did you (Leah) experience me (Jean) experiencing your story?
 - a. What did I do that was helpful?
 - b. Is there any advice you would have for me?