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CONSTRUCTING A NEUROSCIENTIFIC PASTORAL THEOLOGY
OF FEAR AND HOPE

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Dean and Faculty of the University of Denver
and the Iliff School of Theology Joint PhD Program

University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Jason C. Whitehead

June 2010

Advisor: Carrie Doehring

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Abstract

Contemporary therapeutic circles utilize the concept of anxiety to describe a variety of disorders. Emotional reductionism is a detriment to the therapeutic community and the persons seeking its help. This dissertation proposes that attention to the emotion of fear clarifies our categorization of particular disorders and challenges emotional reductionism. I propose that the emotion of fear, through its theological relationship to hope, is useful in therapeutic practice for persons who experience trauma and PTSD.

I explore the differences between fear and anxiety by deconstructing anxiety. Through this process, I develop four categories which help the emotion of fear stand independent of anxiety in therapy. Temporality, behaviors, antidote and objects are categories which distinguish fear from anxiety. Together, they provide the impetus to explore the emotion of fear.

Understanding the emotion of fear requires an examination of its neurophysiological embodiment. This includes the brain structures responsible for fear production, its defensive behaviors and the evolutionary retention of fear. Dual inheritance evolutionary theory posits that we evolved physically and culturally, helping us understand the inescapability of fear and the unique threats humans fear. The threats humans react to develop through subjective interpretations of experience. Sometimes threats, through their presence in our memories and imaginations, inhibit a person's ability to live out a preferred identity and experience hope.

Understanding fear as embodied and subjective is important. Process theology provides a religious framework through which fear can be interpreted. In this framework, fear is developed as an adaptive human response. Moreover, fear is useful to the divine-human relationship, revealing an undercurrent of hope. In the context of the divine-human relationship fear is understood as an initial aim which protects a person *from* a threat, but also preserves them *for* novel future relationships.

Utilizing a “double-listening” stance, a therapist hears the traumatic narrative and counternarratives of resistance and resilience. These counternarratives express an orientation towards hopeful futures wherein persons thrive through living out a preferred identity. A therapeutic practice incorporating the emotion of fear will utilize the themes of survival, coping and thriving to enable persons to place their traumatic narrative within their meaning systems.

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Chapter One: Introduction, Methods and Procedures

This dissertation is a constructive examination of the emotion of fear and its relationship to hope. Human beings are unique creatures who bear similar capacities to other animal species (such as the ability to be afraid), but with unique complications (such as planning and hoping for the future). My premise is simple: when human beings experience the emotion of fear, they also experience an undercurrent of hope. This dissertation explores the meaning of this relationship by pulling together a variety of sources of knowledge concerning fear, human subjectivity, memory, therapeutic practice, and hope. In order to pull these sources together in a meaningful way, constructing new understandings of fear and hope for pastoral practice, I begin with two questions.

Why now? Why bother?

Poet W.H. Auden, in his work “The Age of Anxiety” described the world as a constantly changing landscape where technology and industrialization wreak havoc on our sense of meaning. I agree that, at times, anxiety plays a large role in the workings of the world. Yet, I do not think, given the current rapid progression of technology that describing the world as anxious is enough. What we experience, parallel to this age of anxiety, is a culture of fear. The culture of fear is indicated by our reactions to the threatening events, both near and far, which are experienced through our constant connection to a variety of media and relational sources. Our culture of fear is revealed in the unwarranted hyper-vigilance most often directed toward the other and/or the

environment. We witness the reporting of murder and crime during the evening news; we witness natural disasters as they unfold; we bear the scars of national tragedy, not to mention the personal experiences of threats and trauma we carry in our memories.

The rapid infusion of immediate access to violent and traumatic events furthered the evolution of our current culture of fear. Since early 2002, the United States has engaged in a “War on Terror” which, with a simple twist of language, can be reframed as a “fight against fear.” As this fight continues, the rate of diagnosis of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) for our war weary has increased dramatically. PTSD is now applied to anyone who bears the scars of witnessing, experiencing or even hearing about a traumatic or threatening event. Fear, it seems, has taken up its own role in the lives of persons across the country, a role that is similar to anxiety but with its own distinct characteristics. In the current contextual milieu it is important to acknowledge the new things we are learning about our human capacity for fear and the resilient hopes that accompany it.

Put simply, it is no longer enough to deal with anxiety alone. There are too many known threats that people utilize in order to alter their relational behaviors to ignore its use in therapeutic settings. In order to remedy this situation, I will explore some of the distinct characteristics of the emotion of fear. To that end, I will examine evidence from neuropsychologists, memory specialists, narrative philosophers and therapists and process theologians. This culminates in the development of a neuro-hermeneutical framework for understanding fear and its relationship to hope for clinical settings.

This research is necessary because dealing with anxiety alone in therapeutic settings limits the ability of someone to connect what they find threatening to what they

find meaningful. This project grows out of my own observations as a pastoral counselor. In the final chapter of this dissertation, I describe how this research changes my therapeutic approach with one particular client, Rachael. Rachael was mugged and subsequently withdrew from her relationships with others. At the time I saw Rachael I practiced out of a therapeutic lens that gave primacy to anxiety as a motivator for change. While Rachael improved with our sessions, we never arrived at a point where this event was adequately included in her meaning system. This left her with ways of dealing with the stress of the memory, but a lack of understanding about what the trauma revealed about her life. I am now convinced that if I utilized lenses of anxiety and fear, I could have helped her address her fears in ways that revealed resistance, resilience and most importantly her stories of possibility and hope.

My inattention to the key role that fear played in Rachael's life is indicative of a larger problem within the current clinical context in North America. New research into the neuropsychology of fear sheds light on the inescapability of the emotion of fear. New paradigms of thinking about human subjectivity help us grasp the individuality of our experience. Process theology builds a system of meaning based on the understanding that God offers us the best possible outcome in any moment given the past circumstances that brought us to that moment. All of these perspectives were missing when I met Rachael. I want pastoral counselors and caregivers to have access to the resources I was missing, resource for dealing with the emotion of fear. I want us to diversify the emotions we attribute to various "disorders" and utilize the best strategies for a particular circumstance. I also want to utilize meaning-oriented interpretive frames to help us understand how all of the descriptive research we are accumulating can impact theology

and practice in meaningful ways. The rate at which we are learning about the human brain is astounding. There is much more to learn. However, pastoral theologians should be making the effort to develop connections between this new knowledge and the theological anthropologies that guide our practice and theory-making. This dissertation continues to build that bridge between the theological and the neurological, between the physical and metaphysical. To better understand what I am proposing the remainder of this chapter describes my methodology and the procedural course of this dissertation.

Methods and Procedures

I acknowledge, alongside Browning and Cooper (2004), that “no one starts the investigative or interpretive process with a clean slate. We bring inherited assumptions to whatever we interpret” (p. 266). The interpretive process is complicated, especially one that seeks to examine and put forth new ideas through the critical correlation of knowledge. I come to this project with specific ideas about how I will present an understanding of fear. These ideas are, in large part, informed through my background as a pastoral theologian, ordained minister and licensed clinical social worker. I served in congregational settings and pastoral counseling centers; I have taught courses in formal and informal educational settings. In addition, my role as a student, father, therapist, husband and son also provide a narrative background for how I interpret and interrogate specific theories utilized in this dissertation. Finally, I am aware that my socio-cultural station in life affects my interpretive process. To that end, I identify myself as a straight, middle-class, southern, able-bodied white male who studied the Reformed Tradition, postmodern theology and process thought.

Like anyone, I come to projects influenced by the past circumstances that brought me to a particular moment in time. As a practical theologian, I am continuously engaged in the process of evaluating the relevance and meaning of psychological, theological and other perspectives as they are revealed through the experiences and observations of my life. In addition, I continually define and redefine the theological claims that shape my processes of evaluation. My engagement with the topic of fear stems from my desire to not only help people survive their contact with threatening objects, but also to engage these threats through a lens which can help them thrive. Through this work, I have come to realize how much of an emphasis I place on the ability of human beings to utilize their imaginations and creativity in the face of difficult circumstances.

All of my interpretive lenses have some impact on the development of this project. They are the hidden shadows which dance in the background of my methods and procedures. As much as possible I have tried to root out some of my pre-conceived ideas, utilizing those perspectives that will help this project and limiting the influence of others. Like all interpretive and creative processes a starting point is necessary. I begin by stating what I believe this project is about and where it fits into the body of theological and psychological literature.

This dissertation is not about adapting a psychological term for religious purposes, nor is it an attempt to take theological meanings and make them psychologically relevant. Instead, I am seeking to develop an interpretive milieu through which a thick description of fear is proffered. I contend that theological and psychological disciplines have the responsibility to interrogate and contribute to one another in meaningful ways. Theology and psychology are disciplines which have vested

interests in understanding the condition of human beings, discovering the nature and methods of the ways humans navigate the world and seeking ways of helping people live meaningful lives.

As I write this dissertation I acknowledge that I am first and foremost a theologian. This means that the primary lens through which I interpret the world is theological. I follow in the footsteps of Browning and Cooper (2004) who stated that their “thinking begins in faith, but it is a faith that submits to critical reflection—a critical reflection that we recommend to both the *faith of the modern psychologies and the faith of those who call themselves Christians*” (p 252, *italics authors’*). While my background as a theologian provides a primary lens, I am also a practicing therapist and Licensed Clinical Social Worker. This combination allows me to place my work more firmly in the field of constructive practical theology. Practical theology is a broad discipline which “describes an understanding of the inextricable relation of practice and theory that presumes all of theology is finally practical in its intent” (Ramsay, 2004, p. 6). The aim of constructive practical theology is to not be

interested in merely describing [or retrieving, or applying] what theology has been; we are trying to understand and construct it in the present, to imagine what life-giving faith can be in today’s world. In our case, that structure is an inhabitable, beautiful, and truthful *theology*. (Jones & Lakeland, 2005, p. 2)

Constructive practical theology develops novel meaningful theological statements which present life-giving alternatives to the experiences of a variety of people in a variety of contextual situations.

Within the field of constructive practical theology, psychology and theology come together in the discipline of pastoral theology. This dissertation uses a pastoral

theological method to interpret the human emotion of fear and theorize about its relationship to hope. Pastoral theology is the discipline whereby pastoral experiences and observations are brought into conversation with theological and cognate secular resources, providing a context for critical reflection in order to develop new theological and psychological resources for pastoral practice. This dissertation is a constructive theological project. My intent is to bring together theological, social, psychological and physiological sources into dialogue with experiences and observations concerning fear. This dialogue will allow me to create the space for a constructive pastoral theological understanding of the relationship between fear and hope. These constructive claims regarding a fear/hope relationship will provide a theoretical basis for options for care which reframe the manner in which we think about and treat people who are afraid.

Methodology. Methodology, quite literally, means conversations with methods. In this instance, it more specifically refers to a conversation with a variety of methods of understanding human beings. I have already described how the methodological milieu in which these conversations will take place are best reflected through a critical correlational method. This method provides the context through which disciplines converse with one another in order to provide interpretive possibilities. However, simply identifying my mode of conversation as critical correlation does not necessarily detail how these conversation partners interact with one another. Methodological approaches have recently been scrutinized and evaluated as a result of postmodern approaches to knowledge that raise questions about how we know what we know. Some methodologies rely on empirical evidence, seeing scientific studies as presenting layers of facts about particular subjects. Other methodologies look at the unique experiences of individuals

and seek to generalize from specific moments and experiences. To better understand pastoral theological methodology I want to describe the different types of conversations distinguished by pastoral theologians as they reflect upon what it is they do.

Pastoral theologian Jennings proposes three “languages” which provide different meanings and categories of meanings about religious subjects. First order language designates “the collection of phrases..., narratives..., and liturgies... which are employed to give expression to the way in which a person or community’s life is related to God” (1990, p. 862). These are “simple” statements which reflect the nature of things felt and experienced. God is love is just such a statement of first order religious language. Second order language reflects “the explication and critical evaluation or appropriation of their [the “simple” statements] basic meaning, with the more or less provisional result yielding a theological judgment” (p. 862). In the context of second order language, the statement God is love might become theologically operationalized. Thus, God is love might develop into a mission program feeding the hungry or a pastoral care program in which a group of congregation members visit the sick or homebound. A judgment is made concerning the expression of the relational statement. Finally, Jennings exemplifies pastoral theology as a discipline engaged in third order reflection which examines “the way in which such judgments are made and a critical evaluation of the appropriateness of such procedures” (p. 862). Thus, part of what methodology in a pastoral theological context does is evaluate the jump between first and second order language. The intent is to develop an understanding of the intent and interpretations informing particular leaps in language and test their theological validity.

Jennings' proposal helps us understand the constructive milieu in which methodology informs theological thought. His understanding of language and reflection is certainly reflected in the definitions I have used to describe pastoral theology. However, while this is a pastoral theological project, it also reflects the data and constructive conclusions reached by a variety of disciplines which will require the critical appropriation of their statements about human beings. Therefore, while Jennings provides a general examination of what methodology means for pastoral theological projects, I want to turn to other methods which can further shape the reflections of this dissertation. Psychology of religion has used critical correlational methods in order to engage psychologies and theologies in an interdisciplinary fashion. Debates about methodology in psychology of religion circles highlight some of the issues that arise when quantitative approaches to psychology are brought into dialogue with hermeneutical approaches to knowledge.

Two major methodological traditions in psychology of religion identified by Belzen and Hood (2006) are the "empiricist-analytical and the hermeneutical orientations" (p. 6). They see these two methodological traditions as both prevalent in psychological research and informing the sub-discipline of psychology of religion. The empiricist-analytical tradition has often been associated with quantitative research which utilizes a particular scientific methodology to produce data concerning a hypothesis. The hermeneutic methodological approach is often associated with a qualitative approach to research and discovery. Until now the empirical tradition has dominated most forms of psychological research. However, Belzen and Hood proposed that in order for there to be a true revolution in psychology of religion methodology "a shift from or at least an

expansion of the existing paradigm could occur through a greater integration of the hermeneutical tradition into the field” (2006, p. 8).

The most promising methodological advancement which incorporates this shift in methodological thinking is in the levels of analysis approach. Emmons and Paloutzian (2003) have called for a common methodological paradigm to guide the work of psychologists of religion. The authors point to the idea of “the *multilevel interdisciplinary paradigm*” which “recognizes the value of data at multiple levels of analysis while making nonreductive assumptions concerning the value of spiritual and religious phenomena” (p. 395). The value of exploring this approach is in its relationship to the use of third order language in pastoral theological methodology. The non-reductive stance of the authors towards quantitative and hermeneutical approaches to knowledge provides a helpful frame for the work being done in this project.

As I noted earlier, in describing the constructive nature of practical theology, as pastoral theologians we utilize a variety of experiences (clinical experiences, pastoral experiences, theological observations, etc.) to provide the material for conversation with a variety of disciplines (neurophysiology, psychology, anthropology, theology, personality theory, etc.) in order to develop novel theological, pastoral and clinical insights which can advance methods of care. The caveat relative to a multilevel approach is that despite its nonreductive stance, it is most often psychology that informs religion without the reciprocation of pastoral theological methodology. This is not enough to dismiss the approach outright, but instead call for an adaptation which allows for knowledge to flow in meaningful ways through a reciprocal relationship.

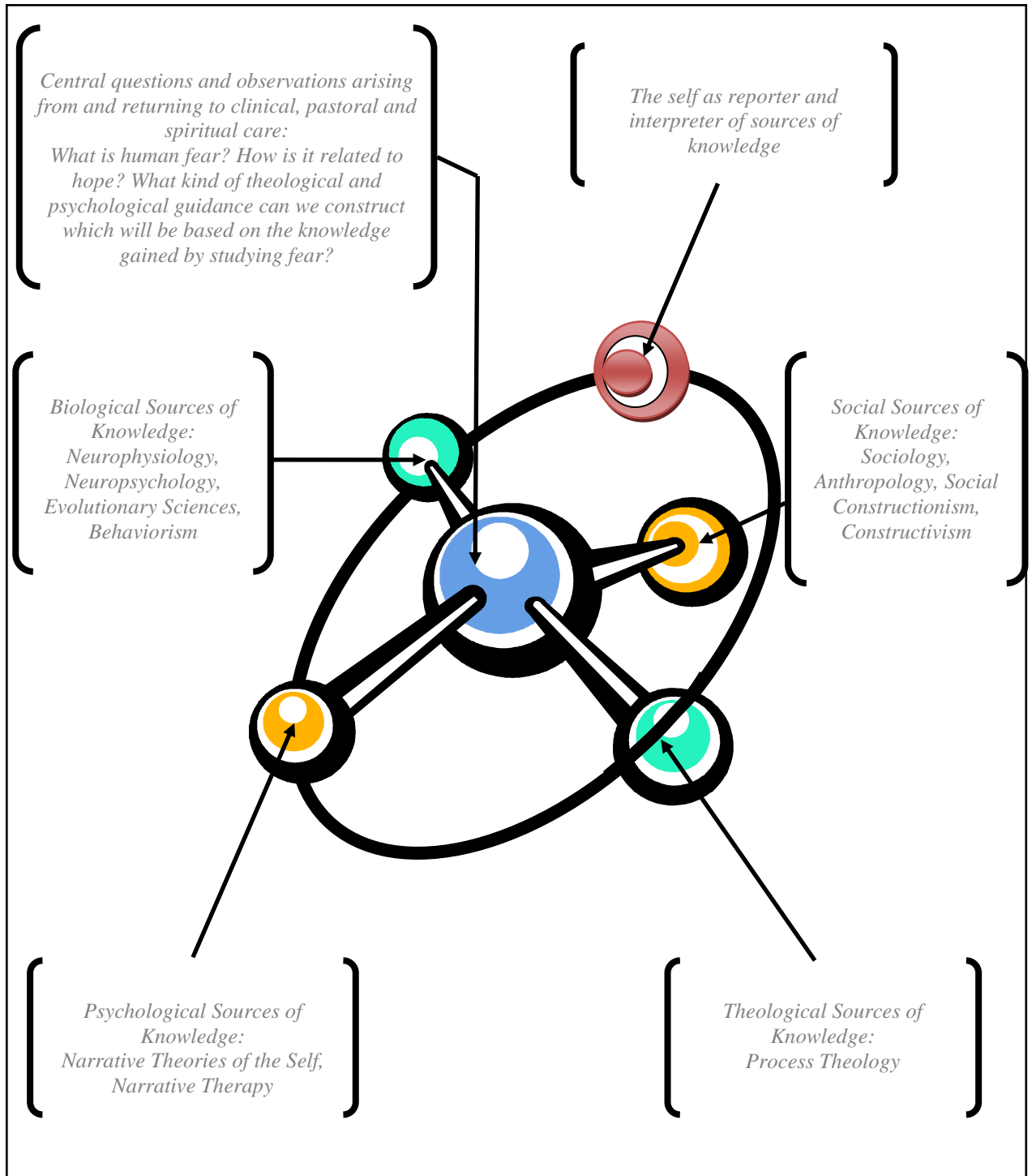
Therefore, while there is much to applaud in this multilevel methodological approach, the lack of reciprocity leaves much to be desired. It may very well be that the metaphor which describes it reveals an intentional or unintentional hierarchy of knowledge privileging psychology over religious ways of understanding the world. Thus, when a levels of analysis approach is used by psychologists with a modern, rather than postmodern approach to knowledge, particular sources of knowledge are automatically thought to provide more or less authoritative input to the central themes of a project.

As I noted earlier, this project is shaped by who I am; thus, any method and procedure, will reflect the point of view of the author. Browning and Cooper reminded us, “*While we distance ourselves from our pre-understanding, we do not forget that we have a pre-understanding*” (2004, p. 267, *italics authors*). To think that the only meaningful relationship between psychology and religion is one where psychology informs religion is to short change the relationship. Utilizing an implicit modernist approach to knowledge, the pre-understandings we carry with us privilege certain data. Thus, we forget we have a pre-understanding and believe that the knowledge from one source is more important than knowledge from other sources. From a psychologist’s point of view, psychology can only help religion, not be helped by it. The same could be said for religious person’s attempting to adapt this model as it is. What I propose in this project is a re-imagining of the levels of analysis metaphor utilized to describe a multilevel methodology of critical correlation that uses postmodern approaches to psychological and religious knowledge.

Rather than set up a series of levels which can imply a hierarchical understanding related to the varieties of knowledge concerning human beings, I choose to imagine my

method as falling under the rubric of “Spheres of Knowledge.” Most often this moniker is utilized to describe how a person creates a unified body of knowledge related to a specific subject. For this project, I see this approach as providing the milieu for the critical appropriation and interpretation of heterogeneous disciplines. Used as a methodological approach, “Spheres of Knowledge” is an attempt to create a methodology that realizes both the pre-understanding position of the author and the search for a reciprocal relationship between different disciplines. With this recognition, the procedure of the dissertation will take a critical correlational approach to constructing novel insights which challenge both theological and psychological understandings of fear and its relationship to hope.

I see each “Sphere of Knowledge” as contributing specific knowledge which can help provide a “thicker” understanding of the human capacity for fear, as well as construct novel relationships between fear and hope. By utilizing this metaphor I am proposing a visual map for the procedures of this project. My understanding of this methodological approach can be represented thusly:



This visual representation depicts the ways in which the interpreter of these sources takes a particular position relative to the knowledge presented. The placement of the self in an orbit around the structure implies the dynamic impact that different perspectives have on

the reader/interpreter as they re-encounter the central question or thesis of a project through different sources of knowledge. When a particular source is critically read it shapes the manner which the author reads additional sources from the same or other disciplines. Furthermore, as each of these critically read sources of knowledge are interpreted by an author, they impact the systemic relationships which inform any critical or constructive response to the central question.

For example, when I critically introduce physiological understandings of fear it impacts the interpretive milieu of the dissertation as a whole. The perspective I take on the physiology of fear shifts my overall perspective on the central question, limiting or expanding how other disciplines are correlated to develop a “thicker” understanding of fear. Ultimately, this is a theological project, and my pre-understanding of this impacts the outcomes I express. I am using a methodological approach that builds critical relationships between seemingly disparate sources of knowledge with the intent of providing constructive outcomes that will provide new theological insights and pastoral practices. What I have to offer in the way of theological insights also impacts the interpretive psychological milieu as I pull together quantitative and phenomenological understandings of human fear and interpret them with a theological lens. Therefore, while conversations with various partnering disciplines concerning fear will inevitably push and pull the dissertation in new directions, the knowledge they provide will be filtered through the theological lens that I bring with me in order to construct new insight for pastoral practice.

Procedures. As I stated earlier, this visual model of “Spheres of Knowledge” provides a bridge to the procedures of this dissertation. Utilizing a bio-psycho-socio-

theological approach to understanding human beings, I intend to build a thick description of what it means to be a human being who experiences fear. In some ways I look to Whitehead (1929/1985) who once discussed a metaphysical method of discovery as “the flight of an aeroplane. It starts from the ground of particular observation; it makes a flight in the thin air of imaginative generalization; and it again lands for renewed observation rendered acute by rational interpretation” (p. 5). This dissertation begins in Chapter Two with the observation that human beings experience fear; that psychological sources do not always separate fear from anxiety effectively; and, our current cultural milieu necessitates that we begin to think about ways of using fear in theological and clinical settings.

Chapter Three takes a look at the neurophysiological, evolutionary and behavioral understandings of fear. This embodied approach to the emotion of fear provides an initial understanding of its impact on human functioning. It also lays the groundwork for the clinical themes of surviving, coping and thriving. These three themes are the ones I find most helpful in helping people examine and deal with their fears.

In Chapter Four I develop a concept of human subjectivity utilizing subjective components of experience and constructionism. In addition to understanding subjectivity I put forth a narrative theory of the self as well as narrative understandings of change. In this chapter, I am looking at the manners in which fears develop environmentally through our experiences and our social contexts. This adds a distinct understanding of fear which builds on its neuropsychological underpinnings but is manifested in the unique ways in which we interpret threats in the world.

Chapter Five utilizes process theology as the best theological system for understanding the divine-human relationship. It explains how that relationship plays out

through human activity in the world, specifically in the human experience of fear. This chapter develops process theology as the theological system that best understands humans through emotional, self-determination and creative lenses. Furthermore, due to the specific concepts of power and the “initial aim” process theology provides an additional understanding of the meaning of fear in the lives of human beings. The final portion of Chapter Five develops a concept of hope based on theological and psychological research.

Chapter Six introduces 15 propositions which pull together the main corpus of research in this dissertation. Through the course of this chapter I develop a theological anthropology that pays particular attention to embodiment, subjectivity, emotions, theology and relationality. From there, I move to developing a pastoral theology of the emotion of fear and its relationship to hope. This exposition leads to an understanding of fear that is both adaptive and, at times, maladaptive. Finally, Chapter Six ends with an examination of the themes of surviving, coping and thriving as they are seen developing out of the research of the previous chapters.

The final chapter of this dissertation serves two purposes. First, it posits that Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is better seen as related to fear-based memories than as an anxiety induced disorder. Utilizing the term neuro-hermeneutical, I offer a microcosm of the arguments laid out in this dissertation. I offer this as one way to see how we might incorporate some of the neurological data we understand about the brain into an interpretive framework that helps develop novel therapeutic approaches. Furthermore, I contend that a broader definition of trauma is more useful in clinical settings in order to help people with the particular issues they bring to therapy. I end this

chapter, and the dissertation, with a case study involving Rachael. Here, I apply the three themes developed earlier utilizing a narrative therapeutic framework in order to re-imagine my early therapeutic work with Rachael.

Chapter Two: How Anxiety and Fear Shape our Culture and Life

This chapter sets the stage for the theoretical work that follows. I will draw on psychology and sociology to posit that both fear and anxiety deserve a place in therapeutic settings. Both emotions play vital roles in how we interpret the world. Yet, anxiety is often the emotion most likely to be dealt with in therapeutic settings. To be sure, large bodies of literature exist concerning both emotions and just a simple search on either term will yield tens of thousands of articles about one or the other.¹ However, when it comes to the clinical use of these two emotions, anxiety is by far a more preferred emotion to examine. This leaves the emotion of fear most often tied to phobias and the occasional panic attack. These emotional reactions are important, but do not fully capture the possibilities of utilizing fear in the clinic. Furthermore, while it may seem obvious that these emotions are different they are often collapsed under the term anxiety. It is my hope to provide an examination of these two emotions which reveals their distinguishing characteristics, allowing us to further understand the impact and possibilities of understanding and utilizing the emotion of fear.

There are many definitions of anxiety. Arguably, the most popular definition in a western context is derived from the most recent version of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR)*. By using the *DSM-IV-TR* as my primary source for a definition of anxiety, I make a statement about the usefulness of the resource as an authority. To that end, I want to describe both my reasons for utilizing this resource,

as well as a variety of critiques that have been leveled towards it. The *DSM* in any incarnation is a flawed document. Therefore, I want to provide the milieu through which anxiety and fear can be seen separately. I will accomplish this by engaging this definition of anxiety through a deconstructive lens. Following my critique of the *DSM-IV-TR*, I introduce the concept of deconstruction. This provides the basic source material that will guide my deconstruction of anxiety. By the end of the deconstructive process I will show that anxiety and fear should not be considered collapsible terms, and they are distinct enough to warrant clinical attention to each.

Reminding people of the separation between fear and anxiety serves the purpose of introducing fear as an important therapeutic emotion. The question that remains is what is the contextual urgency for distinguishing these emotions? I find the answer to this question in the juxtaposition of the phrases “age of anxiety” and “culture of fear”. The utilization of these two terms opens a doorway for me to reconceptualize the current state of western culture as both anxious and fearful. By doing so, I place fear as a central emotion to our interpretations of the world and the threats it contains. The remainder of this dissertation will expand on the importance of fear utilizing physiological, psychological and theological disciplines. Through this data we will come to understand the emotion of fear and develop some meanings relative to its relationship with hope and its usefulness in therapeutic settings.

The DSM-IV, TR

History, authority and usage.

I first became aware of the *DSM-IV-TR* during my preparation to become a clinical social worker. The *DSM-IV-TR* was presented as an authoritative but flawed

document. As a tool it was presented as thorough but often reductionistic in its conclusions. While it contained significant data, it also eschewed language regarding the uniqueness of individuals in favor of more global terms about disorder. I was taught to think of the *DSM-IV-TR* as providing tentative connections between individuals in clinical settings and others who described similarly problematized lives. This interpretation of the *DSM-IV-TR* helps complicate its meanings, allowing myself and others to use it as *a* tool rather than *the* tool to understand a person's disordered life.

Use of the *DSM-IV-TR* is widespread in mental health fields in the United States. At the same time, critiques of this definitive document are equally as widespread. Many clinicians have critiqued the *DSM* and its preceding editions. Some of these critiques are meant to diminish its authority; other critiques are intended to provide source material for each new edition in order to solidify its support and make it both more reliable and valid.

The *DSM* is currently published as a text revision to its fourth version. The first version of the *DSM* was conceptualized in 1952 with the intent of collecting and classifying a variety of mental "disorders" into a system based on observable criteria. The return of veterans from World War II with acute symptoms of distress provided the impetus for the first *DSM*. This was in contrast to the lifelong types of mental illness that were previously the focus of mental health practitioners (Malik & Beutler, 2002, p. 4). Early versions of the *DSM* contained roughly half the diagnostic labels and almost a tenth of the pages of current versions. By the third edition authors sought the incorporation and assignment of diagnoses linked with research "rather than simply the consensus of members or experts" (p. 4). The hope was to increase the reliability and validity of the text. The third edition also introduced a multi-axial diagnostic system which included both

physical conditions and stressors alongside the mood and personality “disorders” (p. 4). All of the editions since that time focused on greater reliability through research. The authors also reached out to other mental health professionals and special “Efforts were made to include women and racial and ethnic minorities” (p. 7). A later “text revision” was undertaken of the *DSM-IV* in order to bridge the gap between the current version and the forthcoming fifth edition. The *DSM-IV-TR* corrects factual errors, keeps information current, makes changes relative to new research, improves its didactic value, and updates various codes (APA, 2000, p. xxix).

This brief historical account provides a basic outline of the development of the *DSM* through the *DSM-IV-TR*. With each incarnation, work groups made attempts to increase its reliability and validity. My reasons for using this document to provide a definition of anxiety do not hinge completely on its historical development. Tradition is not a good enough reason to maintain the use of a particular item. Instead, it is the authority and use of the *DSM-IV-TR* that leads me to understand its importance for clinically defining important concepts.

Social workers Kutchins and Kirk (1997) asserted that:

On the shelf of every mental health professional is a copy of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. The American Psychiatric Association’s 900-page reference book attempts to describe and classify each one of 300 mental disorders. Even though it is poorly organized, offers no suggestions for treatment, presents its material in wooden prose, and costs \$55, each edition of the manual is destined to sell more than a million copies. Few other professional reference works are so regularly stocked in trade and college bookstores, and few are read by so many lay people. And none have so broad an impact on so many sectors of life. (pp. 10-11)

The reach of the *DSM-IV-TR* is evidenced by the breadth of its reading audience. It is used by mental health professionals, students, teachers and interested “untrained” persons

as an authoritative document pertaining to mental illness. Its diagnoses and definitions pervade the cultural milieu and it has developed into an answer book for all questions related to mental illness. In terms of usage, the reach of the *DSM* is far and wide. It is taught in classes, used in mental health settings, and read at local bookstores; its ongoing role in defining the language used in debates about mental health and disorder expands with each new edition.

In addition to the ways the *DSM* defines acceptable standards for mental health diagnosis, its role in financial reimbursement continues to add to its authority. Psychologists Caplan and Cosgrove (2004) remarked that “this manual has become increasingly influential, due to the fact that third-party reimbursement now usually requires that patients receive a *DSM* diagnosis” (p. xxi). By requiring a *DSM* diagnosis for reimbursement the marketplace is an unwitting accomplice in developing the authority of the *DSM*. Therapists Erikson and Kress (2005) state that “because of its economic ‘power,’ influence, and popularity, practitioners *must* use the *DSM* system in order to maintain an active and competitive presence in each of the mental health fields” (*italics mine*, p. x). Its economic prowess and authority is unmatched in mental health circles in the United States, and as such “it is the key to millions of dollars in insurance coverage for psychotherapy, hospitalization, and medications” (Kutchins & Kirk, p. 12).

The power and authority of the *DSM* extends beyond economics into the daily language of mental health practitioners. Erikson and Kress stated that “The *DSM*’s multiaxial assessment system has become the primary language of communication regarding client problems, offering a ‘shorthand’ for reducing complex information about clients into manageable form” (p. ix). The *DSM* provides a basic language that is

authoritative through its widespread use in mental health settings. Widespread use of the *DSM* connotes acceptance, not correctness. It also reveals an undeniable influence and authority. Adding to its air of authority are the widespread critiques of the *DSM*. Controversy often breeds interest and the *DSM* has been highly critiqued throughout its history. Two of these critiques are important as they shed light on concerns of this dissertation. These critiques can be couched under the rubrics of politics and constructivism.

Politics and constructionism.

Kutchins and Kirk characterize the *DSM* as “the repository of a strange mix of social values, political compromise, scientific evidence, and material for insurance claim forms” (p. x). For those who wish to demystify the *DSM*, politics is a major source of criticism. Furthermore, postmodern thinkers challenge the *DSM* from a constructivist standpoint, claiming that the knowledge contained therein is incapable of truly capturing the phenomenological complexity of an individual.

The *DSM* is a political document. It is a socially negotiated text through which varying parties use their power to gain acceptance for particular labels describing what is “normal” versus what is “abnormal.” While its authors might contend that the *DSM* is an objective tool for accurate diagnosis, it is more likely the truth that it, like any conceptual framework, has its limits.

The major role politics played in the making of the modern *DSM* is in the ways bias has crept into the work group process. Feminist psychologist Caplan’s critiques of the *DSM* draw attention to the biases inherent in its creation and use (Caplan, 1991; Cosgrove & Caplan, 2005). She is not alone in her critique of bias. Kutchins and Kirk

discuss the role that gender bias played with introduction of a new disorder “based on psychoanalytic theories of masochism” (p. 19). The authors devote a chapter of their book to the debate that occurred around Self-Defeating Personality Disorder and its eventual removal from the *DSM-IV* for lack of scientific evidence (pp. 126-175). Another political battle for the inclusion of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder has been waged throughout the years. Its eventual inclusion is thought to be the culmination of acquiescence to political pressures from outside groups.

Another political critique is drawn from an apparent conflict of interest between the works groups for the *DSM* and insurance companies. Cooper draws attention to the fact that during the process of developing criteria for diagnoses they are often adjusted in order to provide opportunity for more timely reimbursement from insurers (2004, p. 19). Cooper found that “the *DSM* committee knowingly alters the classification scheme for insurance purposes” (p. 22). That bias and economics present challenges to the reliability and validity is surprising given the adamant support that the *DSM* receives. However, the most damning critique of the *DSM* may stem from its modernist assumptions about mental health and the disorders that affect peoples’ lives.

Postmodern constructionist thought provides an additional source of scrutiny of the *DSM*. Eriksen and Kress called human beings “active creators of experience, not passive receptors of an objective reality. To know is to construct, not to find” (p. 188). Diagnosis, from this perspective, is not an objective exercise in labeling thoughts and behaviors. Instead, diagnosis develops through a constructive process of observation by human beings and their experiences. The *DSM* is a document created by some people with the power to name behaviors, thoughts and emotions. Through their “expertise” as

clinicians, these people meet to describe and define particular groupings of behaviors as deviant from “normal” actions and reactions. By drawing on research which is oriented to a modernist scientific method, they give these labels further power and authority.

Two strands of critique develop out of a postmodern view of the *DSM*. Each method of critique offers something to help us interpret the *DSM* and diagnosis. The first strand of critique is social constructionism. Social constructionists understand that when people get together and share experiences, meanings are created. This critique shares some similarities with another form of critique derived from the social constructivist point of view.² Social constructivists understand that individuals cannot fully recognize the world for what it is. People, no matter how steeped in research cannot understand an objective world apart from the meanings and constructions they rely on to interpret it. I want to begin this section of critiques by talking about social constructionism. Eriksen and Kress state that “the ‘social constructionist’ perspective relativizes meanings as socially derived creations, rather than references to already-existing essences” (p. 188).

For example, say a work group gathers to discuss and develop the criteria for a particular disorder. Their discussions will include some of the research about that disorder, but it also cannot help but include their collective experiences with the disorder. This collective experience might encompass family or friends who have symptoms related to the disorder; it may include clients they have seen; it may include particular psychological theories they like or dislike; it may include adopted opinions of their mentors or testimony of experts. Regardless of how much the committee leans on research it cannot divorce itself from the experiences and agendas each person brings with them. Accordingly, theories of social constructionism pay particular attention to

how outside influences impact the negotiated meanings of groups, lending some skepticism to the process of disorder creation and dissemination. These negotiated meanings may have some validity in a larger context; however, they do not explain or adequately represent the complexity and uniqueness of a particular person's behaviors. As social constructionists think about diagnosis they are wary of a one-size fits all package like the *DSM*.

For example, Psychologist McNamee sees diagnosis as a dual-edged sword. On one hand, a diagnosis provides people with "the sense that now that the problem has been identified, a treatment program can begin" (2002, p. 149). Thus, diagnosis provides a language for new meanings to be constructed around particular symptoms. However, McNamee cautions that a diagnostic label can also communicate to certain people that they are a lost cause "by virtue of being identified as flawed, inferior, unhealthy, and anything but 'normal'" (p. 149). Her ultimate claim is that diagnosis is more than just descriptive, "rather, diagnosis functions as a moral judgment. It conveys the deficit of one to others" (p. 151).

The critiques of social constructionists reveal the need to see the *DSM* through critical eyes. While *DSM* diagnoses are based on research, human beings with particular clinical experiences choose which research is authoritative and conclusive of disorder; they choose the criteria used as clinically significant indicators of "normal" versus "abnormal". When we use the *DSM* to diagnose or define particular behaviors, thoughts or emotions, we should do so with a critical eye. Social constructionists attempt to critique the underlying theoretical concerns of the *DSM*. While they do not necessarily

point to particular diagnoses, they offer the opportunity to examine this authoritative text through appropriate social lenses.

Social “constructivists often doubt the human ability to know the world ‘as it is’ in an objective sense that is independent of personal and social constructions” (Raskin & Lewandowski, 2000, p. 16). Thus, while the *DSM* may provide some knowledge or language, its authority should be limited to being one voice among many rather than the sole voice about diagnosis. Raskin and Lewandowski remarked that:

Human involvement occurs regardless of whether the construction of disorder at hand is rooted in the ideology of *DSM-IV*, constructivism, or some other theoretical orientation. Because personal realities are constituted by one’s constructions of events, fostering multiplicity in applying constructions of disorder expands the number of possibilities open to therapists and clients and keeps an emphasis on the constructed aspects of knowledge about disorder. (p. 20)

Their critique is not with the construction of the *DSM* but its use in therapeutic settings as a crutch. This can lead to a stifling of the client and therapist’s co-creative ability to search out or remake the meaning of particular experiences. It is not that the *DSM* might be wrong, but that the ways it has been applied and referenced have given it more authority as an objective and scientific text than it should be awarded. As a document of human negotiation and construction the *DSM* has the power to name things. From the constructivist standpoint, it is clients who make meaning from their experiences and they should have the power to name these things.

Eriksen and Kress defined constructivism as “respect, multiple perspective taking, humility, willingness to reconstruct meaning, and a recognition that there is no ‘essential’ diagnostic truth or theory that applies to all clients in all circumstances” (p. 189). Instead of blanket statements about symptoms Eriksen and Kress want to ground the therapeutic

discourse in an understanding that “every mental health practitioner, like every client, is engaged in the act of making sense of experience” (p. 189). Thus, diagnostic categories become provisional labels that the therapist and client use to negotiate the meaning of experience. Knowledge contained in the *DSM* should not be viewed as completely objective data that can be applied to every individual who presents certain symptoms. Even people who share similar criteria for the same diagnostic label cannot be lumped together due to a unique understanding of their experiences. From the constructivist viewpoint, the person is the ultimate meaning maker in any system. While diagnostic labels may help construct a new set of meanings they should not be used as taxonomic categories that pathologize large swathes of a population.

Using the *DSM* in this dissertation is my way of recognizing the authority and power it has to provide descriptive data about particular mental health labels. It is a flawed linguistic tool which enables me to ground my understanding of particular terms in language and resources that are readily available. As such, the *DSM* is not only useful and authoritative, but it is also *one* source of information that provides insight into the experiences of clients rather than *the* source of information for insight. I have two reasons for presenting the *DSM* as I did. First, I wanted to provide a resource that is ubiquitous in mental health circles in both its acceptance and use. Second, I wanted to point out that the manner in which the *DSM* is constructed and used perpetuates an understanding of terms that can be reductionistic. The reductionism in both the naming and claiming of terms is why I will utilize the description of anxiety in the *DSM* as my beginning point for deconstructing the meaning of anxiety.

Deconstruction and Anxiety

Deconstruction is more of a process than a method. Deconstruction happens when a text is read and a deeper reading into the meanings takes place. It is a process of seeing into a text rather than just taking it apart through critical lenses. Royle (2000) calls deconstruction “above all perhaps, a questioning of the ‘is’, a concern with what remains to be thought, with what cannot be thought within the present” (p. 7). Thus, deconstruction plays with the conceptual meanings of a word, attempting to develop what is unsaid and how that might influence future readings of the text. Royle explained deconstruction using the words of Derrida

Every conceptual breakthrough amounts to transforming, that is to say deforming, an accredited, authorized relationship between a word and a concept, between a trope and what one had every interest to consider to be an unshiftable primary sense, a proper, literal or current usage. (as cited in Royle, 2000, p. 8)

In order for deconstruction to “work” there should be a transformation of the relationship between a word and its associated conceptual framework. This transformation reshapes a present meaning and carries that word’s meaning into the future. Furthermore, it attempts to undermine the stability of the relationship between a word and its conceptualization, allowing for new things to happen. Derrida called for deconstruction through destabilization. He opined that destabilization is

on the move in, if one could speak thus, ‘things themselves’; but it is not negative. Destabilization is required for ‘progress’ as well. And the ‘de-’ of *deconstruction* signifies not the demolition of what is constructing itself, but rather what remains to be thought beyond the constructivist or destructionist scheme. (as cited in Royle, 2000, p. 6)

By deconstructing the *DSM* definition of anxiety we have the opportunity to see what it is, and also what it could mean without actually discarding the definition. To say that this definition is useful and authoritative is to say that it is rife with meaning, and it

provides one way of conceptually identifying anxiety and the effects it has on a person's life. Yet, within the ways anxiety is conceptualized much can be destabilized. Through this process of destabilization and transformation I will show how the relationship between fear and anxiety is conceptualized in the *DSM*. More importantly though, we also may begin to see how anxiety could be re-conceptualized. This allows me to assert that the relationship between fear and anxiety is complex and conducive to destabilization leaving space for both to exist in clinical practice.

Deconstructing anxiety.

One of the tasks of each new generation is to build upon the foundations of what has come before it. Language is built upon the foundations of previous languages. While parts of words and their meanings remain the same, we can expect that a full understanding of a term should change with their context. To use an analogy, cities are built upon the foundations of previous cities, often expanding outward and upward, transforming landscapes and horizons. In Denver, Colorado, older homes often have their tops “popped” in order to add space and modernize a house. Two things occur when a top is “popped.” First, the space the house occupies is increased. While much of the original charm of the home is retained, the new addition can be seen as both part of the house and separate from its original structure. Furthermore, in order to “pop” a top, the foundations of the house must be in good order so that the older structure can handle the weight of the additional space. In this section I plan to “pop the top” on the word and concept of anxiety with the hope of seeing its relationship to fear.

The foundation for the exploration of anxiety and fear comes from the *DSM* definition of anxiety, and its lack of attention to the concept of fear. Two sources of

material can help us understand the foundations upon which the current *DSM* definition is formed. Freud's penultimate definition of anxiety provides one source of foundational material. Through a close reading of these foundational definitions, I will tease out some of the possible sources for differentiation in the definition of anxiety.³ It is through this process of differentiation of the terms anxiety and fear that I will show how both terms are needed and necessary in mental health language.

There is a second case to be made as a result of this differentiation/deconstruction process; namely, the contemporary contextual need for a separation between fear and anxiety. It is the current cultural milieu which provides the source and impetus for this separation process. British sociologist Furedi posited that we now live in a "culture of fear". From my perspective, the idea of a "culture of fear" parallels our "age of anxiety" but required something different as a response.

The initial quest of this discussion concerning anxiety is a deeper understanding of the relationship between anxiety and fear. I argue that anxiety is the term of choice in psychotherapeutic circles even when fear could better encapsulate some emotional and/or experienced content. The *DSM-IV-TR (DSM)* defined anxiety as "The apprehensive anticipation of future danger or misfortune accompanied by a feeling of dysphoria or somatic symptoms of tension. The focus of anticipated danger may be internal or external" (A.P.A., 2000, p. 820). It is important to note that despite the inclusion of phobias and panic as disordered reactions, there is no definition of fear in the *DSM-IV-TR*. I surmise from this omission that the authors of the *DSM* believe that the term anxiety describes the broad range of emotions, cognitions, and reactions to experiences of "danger or misfortune". A curious student would note that a wide variety of literature

seems to bear a nuanced story about the emotions of fear and anxiety. This raises the question of how an authoritative text, such as the *DSM*, can collapse these two terms when distinctions between them may be more appropriate. Anxiety may have become so “meaning-full” that it is in danger of becoming meaningless. The task of deconstruction is to help anxiety become “meaning-less” so that it, and the other concepts it has consumed, may once again be meaningful. The search for a meaning-less anxiety begins with Freud’s later writings on the subject.

Freud’s understanding of anxiety evolved throughout his life. In the later years of his writing, his work in *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety* reveals the culmination of his thought. Freud’s major transformation concerning anxiety was his move away from its association with the libido. This later work on anxiety bears some similarity to the way in which anxiety is conceptualized in the current *DSM*. Two things are revealed in Freud’s work concerning anxiety. First, there are significant points of connection between Freud’s definition and the *DSM* definition. Second, there are obvious differences between fear and anxiety that have to do with temporal reactions, antidotes, and intensity.

Freud’s basic definition of anxiety was that it “is a reaction to a situation of danger” (Freud, 1925/1962, p. 128). This seems simple enough; a person encounters a danger or threat and reacts by becoming anxious. However, as compact as this definition of anxiety is, it lacks any meaningful specificity. If anxiety is a reaction, then when does this reaction occur? Is anxiety formed in the moment of realizing a danger or is it something that occurs after reflection concerning the threat? When people become anxious are they reacting to the memory of a threat, or are they anxious because a new present threat reminds them of a previous threat? As I understand Freud, the term

reaction relates to how a person cognitively deals with a situation. Relative to anxiety, a reaction requires, in the words of pastoral theologian Seward Hiltner, a “perceptible pause” (1960, p. 47). To be anxious is to re-act, to act again. Thus, a person acts relative to a dangerous experience; and, they also re-act, they pause and act again based on a reflection on that experience and/or first act. To think of anxiety as an emotion that requires pause makes it unique. It also creates a specific meaning beyond just a reaction.

If this is the case, then I would separate the emotions of fear and anxiety by surmising that fear involves the initial action and anxiety is the reaction to the action.

Freud corroborated this by stating that,

when the individual is placed in a new situation of danger it may well be quite inexpedient for him to respond with an anxiety-state (which is a reaction to an earlier danger) instead of initiating a reaction appropriate to the current danger. (p. 134)

Anxiety is not something felt in reaction to danger, but rather something felt when remembering or anticipating a danger. The *DSM* definition corroborates this “reaction to a reaction” by seeing anxiety as “apprehensive anticipation” related to a future threat or misfortune. In the *DSM* anxiety is a reflective emotion that gives rise to present feelings concerning a point in time when something might happen based on a person’s knowledge about what has happened. Therefore, anxiety is different from fear, but most likely arises through a situation where fear has been felt by the person. Put differently, anxiety is manufactured by a person when reflecting on a dangerous situation. On the other hand, fear is felt during a situation of perceived danger. The issue is one of temporality where fear and anxiety are concerned. In this case fear becomes something experienced in the

moment a danger or threat is revealed. Anxiety is felt after the threat has been experienced and the person wishes not to have that experience again.

Hiltner's understanding of a "perceptible pause" reveals a distinction between fear and anxiety along these same lines. He states

a truer statement of the distinction in human beings between fear and anxiety would be to call the first the alarm signal that is read accurately without perceptible pause between signal and interpretation, while the latter involves perceptible pause. (1960, p. 47)

The result of this particular destabilization of anxiety is that the concept cannot be used to describe two separate phenomena. Therefore, what purpose does consolidating fear under the rubric of anxiety do for people who experience both? Can anxiety really provide a meaningful framework for explaining actions related threats *and* the reaction to the action related to threats?

A second area of destabilization for the concept of anxiety is with its antidote. Psychoanalyst Ramzy stated that "The simplest and the most accurate way of defining anxiety, however, is perhaps to contrast it with its opposite, which is peace—peace of the mind" (1960, p. 18). Peace, even peace of mind, is most appropriate for a concept that is a reaction to an action towards a danger or threat. Peace of mind requires the same kind of reflective capacity as anxiety. However, if we are talking about fear—the emotion and action itself—then peace is provide an appropriate antidote or response. When facing a threat, an anxious person who searches for peace of mind would not find the immediate wherewithal to cope and survive. Peace of mind may help them feel calm about the danger a threat poses. However, peace provides no impetus for the appropriate kinds of actions which enable a person to behave accordingly to the value given to the threat. A

better antidote for fear is hope. As this work progresses, I will examine the relationship between fear and hope through two lenses. The first lens sees hope as an antidote to maladaptive fear-based memories. The second lens develops the argument that in all human fear-based reactions there is an undercurrent of hope that supports the emotion of fear and directs human towards future possibilities.⁴

Whether you call anxiety a reaction to a reaction or apprehensive anticipation, it is clear that anxiety shares some relationship the emotion of fear (even the word apprehension has, as one synonym, fear). At the same, it is evident from the beginning of this discussion that there are helpful differences between anxiety and fear, differences that the *DSM* definition ignores. Certainly, fear and anxiety share commonalities with regard to the impact of a threat, but these commonalities are not enough for anxiety to be the sole descriptive term. The temporal significance of the emotional action and the antidote to a particular emotion provide an entry point for discussing their differences. In sense there are other differences that may be helpful to this argument as well.

In Freud's description of anxiety, he expands his understanding in ways that closely parallel the *DSM* definition. He continued by saying that:

Anxiety, then, is in the first place something that is felt... As a feeling, anxiety has a very marked character of unpleasure. But that is not the whole of its quality... Analysis of anxiety-states therefore reveals the existence of (1) a specific character of unpleasure, (2) acts of discharge and (3) perceptions of those acts. (pp. 132-133)

For Freud, perception deals with the ways a person relates to their experiences. For the anxious person, Freud explained that they will experience that anxiety "with the respiratory organs and with the heart" (p. 132). The *DSM* describes this same phenomenon as dysphoria or tension that develops through a state of apprehension about

possible threats. In contrast, the somatic responses to fear are more diffuse throughout the body of a person. A person who is afraid experiences the tension of fear in their muscles as they contract and prepare for action; when we are afraid our heart rate climbs, but our stomachs shut down as our energy is diverted towards the enactment of specific behaviors. In Chapter Three, I will provide a more complete examination of the somatic response to fear. It is enough to note at this point that the bodily and behavioral reactions to the emotions of fear and anxiety are different.

One possible genesis for these different somatic responses relates to the evidence of the existence of a threat. According to the *DSM* for anxiety to arise the threat can be imagined (internally derived) or real (externally derived). To diagnose anxiety related issues, the major requirement is a somatic response of tension or dysphoria around the *possibility* that something threatening may occur. The definitive criteria set forth by Freud and mirrored in the *DSM* can help us fully describe the concept of anxiety (and thus fear). Through their descriptions, anxiety is a cognitively manufactured feeling resulting from reflection or rumination on the possibility of experiencing a danger. No tangible threat is necessary for the experience of anxiety to arise. This is in sharp contrast to the feelings that result from the emotions and actions related to the experience of a threat itself.

The final area of destabilization of the concept of anxiety relates to the presence of an interpreted threat. Anxiety results from us thinking about the possibilities of danger; fear develops out of an emotional reaction to being confronted with a real or imagined threat. As I see it, tension or dysphoria associated with anxiety may be part of the emotional aftermath of the emotion of fear, but to experience the emotion of fear is

something wholly different. To be afraid is to be able to name and experience a threat. It is to subjectively interpret a particular object as threatening to one's life. Anxiety presents around anticipated danger; fear presents during a person's interpretation of a present danger. Freud and the *DSM* do not ever point to actual threats as part of the genesis of anxiety. As psychoanalyst Ramzy points out:

From the psychoanalytic viewpoint: "man [sic] is bound to be always anxious", "man [sic] has even lost the capacity to be afraid... This is probably because Freud considered that only man [sic] can be anxious. Fear is an attribute of the animal, which can react to danger almost like an automaton and in response to a definite stimulus." (1960, p. 25)

Thus, there is room in psychoanalysis for a distinction between fear and anxiety, yet human beings do not become afraid at the experience of a threatening object. The assumption that humans are ultimately controlled by our reasonable minds which leads us to be only anxiety-prone does a great injustice to the embodied nature of our emotions. At best it is an overestimation of our capacities, at worst it is unreasonable assumption born of arrogance. The noteworthy statement in this quote is the direct reference to the notion that fear involves a definite stimulus. In Chapter Two, I will discuss some of the neurophysiological capacities we share with other species which help refute these claims that fear is only the product of lesser minds. Right now, it is worth noting that we share more neurological capacities with animals than may have been known in 1960, when Ramzy was writing. This kind of dismissal of fear and our basic reactions to the real presence of a threat has done nothing to help us understand how fear impacts the clinic.

In this process of destabilization four differences becomes apparent between anxiety and fear. There is a temporal disparity between the onset of anxiety and fear; the source of relief for each emotion differs; there is a unique set of behaviors associated

with each emotional state; and, a real or imagined threatening object will engender the emotion of fear, whereas anxiety relies on possible danger as its source material. The current structure of the *DSM* does not give enough attention to the disparities between fear and anxiety. Their definition of anxiety is helpful and complete, save for one thing. There is no contrasting definitive statement made about the emotion of fear and its impact on “disordered” thoughts and behaviors. For us to truly understand the impact both emotions have on our lives, the creation of an all-consuming category related to anxiety does not prove to be helpful.

What remains to be seen is whether or not this is the time to introduce such a clinical distinction. The question we must ask ourselves is what are the reasons for focusing on this obvious distinction, when years of history tell us that, while there are differences, it is enough to talk about the reactions to threat and danger as anxiety? In a prophetic moment psychologist May remarked that “*Fear ordinarily does not lead to illness if the organism can flee successfully* (p. 90, *italics author’s*). In the current cultural milieu there is little to no chance that someone can flee successfully from the objects that threaten them. I contend that we would be better off thinking that we live in the midst of both an “age of anxiety” and a “culture of fear”. Our inability to escape a constant barrage of images and looming threats has made fear a problem for the people of this current age.

The culture of fear in an age of anxiety.

Luvox, Paxil, Prozac, Zoloft, Effexor, Valium, Xanax, BuSpar, Ativan, and Klonopin are just a few of the anti-anxiety medications listed by the National Institute of Mental Health. These psychopharmaceutical remedies are intended to help people

overcome the excessive oppression of anxiety in their lives (National Institute of Mental Health [NIMH], pp. 20-21). In the context of the United States, anxiety is a barrier to defeat or at least medicate into oblivion. The deleterious effect of anxiety on human beings inhibits our desire to function within the parameters of normalcy. At the same time capitalism and the power of the marketplace determines what is valuable and anxiety sells. I do not condemn the use of anti-anxiety medications. Many people, overwhelmed by their lives, have benefited from anxiolytic drugs. However, today's marketplace needs us to be anxious. While we can never allow anxiety to be eradicated through medication or meditation, there is something new to target in the west.

Alongside our age of anxiety a culture of fear has emerged. Instead of nebulous communists or the anticipation of an atomic holocaust we now have access to the real faces of terrorists, the immediate reporting of natural disasters and flu pandemics; we even have 24-hour access to stories about criminals both near and far that feed our imagination and create real objects for us to fear. This constant auditory and visual assault has given us "real" threats to fear in our lives. We no longer need apprehensively to anticipate a threat or misfortune; we "know" that the threat lurks behind every corner in our neighborhoods, in the eyes of strangers, and in the cultures and religions that are foreign to us. Many people have become convinced that we need to be afraid of the world in which we live and move and have our being. As distinct feelings, I have shown anxiety and fear to differ in their temporal relationship to threats, their antidotes, their behavioral qualities and in the necessity of a real or imagined tangible threat. My purpose here is to describe why this age is different from previous ones, as well as the distinct characteristics leading me to the conclusion that we live in a culture of fear.

I would be wrong to contend that the “age of anxiety” Rollo May and W. H. Auden described had abated. Philosopher and law professor Salecl described multiple “ages of anxiety” occurring in human history. She stated that “When we talk about the new age of anxiety we should not forget that in the last century it was always the case that after some major social crisis there came the age of anxiety” (2004, p. 1). Salecl points to these ages of anxiety as times of reflection and uncertainty following wars, economic vulnerability, and unmitigated violence, as well as crises of the mind occurring due to the proliferation of mental disorders (pp. 1-5). According to my interpretation of Salecl these ages of anxiety are reactions to reactions; they are reflections upon the events themselves occurring after the fact; they also signify “apprehensive anticipation” for what may or may not come next. To talk about the cultural milieu in this manner is to name a collective memory and imagination that permeates the ways in which we live in reflective reaction to the events of our times.

However, with the events of September 11th (along with other terrorist attacks in western countries) some have noticed a change in how significant events are perceived and discussed. Salecl stated, “After September 11th the American government has been keeping the fear of possible new attacks alive by continuously reminding the public of the unpredictable danger that can come from hidden terrorists” (p. 7). She noted that fear rather than anxiety is being peddled in the marketplace. She believed that “Fear [concerns] what can be articulated” (p. 18). In this case the danger of terrorism is the articulated threat that is conveyed to the American public. With a tangible threat, the cultural response mimics the emotion of fear rather than anxiety. That is not to say there is no anxiety, the overlap of the two emotions develops in the imaginative possibilities

derived from the object. That is, when we are reminded of and/or given an object that can be deemed as a threat, such as the terrorist attacks, it engenders the emotion of fear⁵ felt by many Americans in the moment of the attacks. I contend that as we remember these moments, we become both anxious about the future, but also more fearful in the present. Living with constant reminders of our fears establishes a baseline of relationality where the threat of tangible dangerous objects cannot be easily escaped.

Pastoral theologian Bingaman makes the argument that what we are experiencing at this moment in cultural history is a “new anxiety”. His understanding is that the current culture of politics and media creates a hypersensitivity to a pessimistic future which leads to a different form of anxiety in the present (2007, pp. 57-61). He stated

Fear mongers, in droves, heighten our levels of anxiety by offering us a pessimistic view of the future. Unless we do what they tell us and return to a set of values or a system of belief or meaning largely derived from the past, the future, so they say, does not look very promising. Thus, anxious clients, in this climate of fear, confusion, disorientation, and apprehensive expectation, will need, in the context of therapy and counseling, encouragement and permission to identify, explore, modify, and even change their core sets of beliefs about the present and future. (p. 57)

While I agree with Bingaman’s suggestion that a unique form anxiety is present in the current culture, I also wonder how he would discuss the fears that inform this new anxiety. I sense there something in the current cultural condition that reveals more than just a particular brand of worry. It seems there is both a “new anxiety” coming from the worry about future possibilities, and there is also a base level of fear derived from what is peddled in the marketplace. Fear mongers sell the objects that permeate the pessimistic dreams of the future. These purveyors of fear not only sell the notion that something “bad” will happen, but they also sell the object that will make the “bad” dreams come true (as well as the solutions to said problems). Thus, not only is there a “new anxiety”

that must be dealt with on an individual and corporate level (p. 58), but there is also a level of fear based on the real events of the world. This fear is exploited by people in power, and it affects the ways in which people relate to one another in each present moment. We are not just worried about the future, but we also live scared in the present. In the midst of developing this new age of anxiety Bingaman misses out on the culture of fear that is apparent in the actions and relationships of daily life.

So, what is this culture of fear? Researchers Konty, Duell and Joireman (2004) described a longer standing “culture of fear” going back further than September 11th. Their article, based on sociological and social psychology data, described the way fear plays a major role in peoples’ lives. Looking at the research from Glassner, they put forth the idea that

Creating and sustaining this fear serves some of the most powerful interests in American society. The media are interested in cultivating fear because it sells more ads and publications. The more afraid people are, the more information they crave. Politicians are interested in cultivating fear because it provides fertile ground to offer solutions. The more afraid people are, the more they crave solutions to the problem... Commercial interests also benefit as people seek goods and services to make them safer. Finally, various governmental institutions benefit as they receive more funding to take care of the problem. (p. 94)

Our society may well be unable to function without fear. Anxiety may create uncertain ideas about a possible future, but fear, due to the powerful response it engenders, move items off of the shelves now. From politicians to the media, corporations to scientists, fear is necessary in order to provide the appropriate milieu to sell the right solution. Following the terrorist attacks on September 11th (which I understand as both a credible threat and a subsequent political marketing opportunity) the authors described how fear is peddled into the culture to provide a continual state of emergency. They painted a picture that

A daily diet of color-coded warnings and announcements that this or that building is under threat are now de rigeur. Politicians engaged the “politics of fear” (Altheide, 2004) to push through emergency legislation giving control agents more authority to investigate and prevent further attacks and giving the executive branch the authority to use the military as it sees fit. Commercial interests rushed to market products to keep the public safe. Products not previously in demand—gas masks and sealable rooms to guard against biological or chemical weapons, parachutes and inflatable slides to escape from high rises under attack, giant bomb-detecting machines for airports and important buildings—now found a hungry market. New governmental institutions were formed and given tremendous power and oversight. New federal workers in the airports require babies and old ladies to present their shoes for inspection while stray bags are destroyed with explosives. (p. 95)

All of this fear mongering occurred despite that fact that if a similar attack occurred on American soil every year we would still be 15 times more likely to be murdered by another American or equally likely to die in a car accident each year (p. 95).

Terrorists are the fear *du jour*; yet, they do not persist alone as the objects our culture teaches us to fear. The authors continued by looking into the way crime is discussed and treated in the public sphere. Citing a variety of studies they tease out a few themes that are helpful to both our understanding of fear and the ways it is at work in contemporary western culture. Their conclusion is that the more you know about crime the more likely you are to fear it. Moreover, fear of crime restricts social behavior, leading people to distrust their neighbors and desire more punitive measures for criminals (pp. 95-96). To fear crime is to isolate oneself from the greater community, believing and acting in a manner that sees the possible criminal in every person just waiting to get out. It is not to anticipate apprehensively that one might become a victim of crime, instead it is to act in manner where we believe that our victimization is inevitable. Anxiety turns on the outside lights and locks the doors; fear bolts bars to windows and buys a handgun to place under the pillow.

Fear is a relational emotion. To be afraid is to feel threatened by the other/object. Konty et al. posit that “Fear is a relational product, when a social relation is structured such that one entity has the power to dictate the outcome of a second party, the second party will experience fear” (p. 96). When we are fed a constant diet of relationships which, in their unpredictability, make us feel powerless we will be afraid of those relationships. On the other hand, when we are anxious, we are anxious about the possibilities of threats and feel helpless to keep the threat from arising in the first place. The relational difference between anxiety and fear may be one of helplessness verses powerlessness. Namely, the relational structures of anxiety may spark a sense of helplessness, whereas fear engenders powerlessness in relationship to a threat. When a communal sense of powerlessness arises, or is nurtured through the propagation of particular objects as immediate threats, a “culture of fear” transpires. In this culture of fear we behave differently towards the other, believing that evil/threat/danger lies in the stranger and we are powerless to control it.

Sociologist Bauman (2006) claimed that:

Fear is at its most fearsome when it is diffuse, scattered, unclear, unattached, unanchored, free floating, with no clear address or cause; when it haunts us with no visible rhyme or reason, when the menace we should be afraid of can be glimpsed everywhere but is nowhere to be seen. (p. 2)

Initially, Bauman’s statement seems indicative of the confusion between fear and anxiety.

While Bauman seems to be talking about an apprehensive anticipation of what may come, a closer reading suggests a state of being where an object is known yet what is unknown is where the object may strike next or even what it may do. The random possibility that the object may present itself feeds a constant state of fear which

permeates life and creates what Bauman termed “derivative fear,” which he described as the

sentiment of being *susceptible* to danger; a feeling of insecurity (the world is full of dangers that may strike at any time with little or no warning) and vulnerability (in the event of danger striking, there will be little if any chance of escape or successful defence; the assumption of vulnerability to dangers depends more on a lack of trust in the defences available than on the volume or nature of actual threats. (p. 3, *italics author's*)

Insecurity and vulnerability are synonyms for helplessness and powerless. The susceptibility to danger he describes not only feeds the “culture of fear” but it also makes sure that our “ages of anxiety” will persist indefinitely. Thus, when we dare walk into the dangerous world, we do so in fear. At a basic level, we operate under the notion that threats are probable at worst and possible at best. As Bauman points out, “occasions to be afraid are one of the few things of which our times, badly missing certainty, security and safety, are not short. Fears are many and varied” (p. 20). Furthermore, our fears feed a sense of impotence which Bauman calls “that most frightening impact of fear” (p. 20). Thus we not only walk afraid, but also believe there is nothing we can do, should we even be able to recognize it, to stop the objects that threaten us.

Bauman used the trial of Adolf Eichmann to express how fear permeates our relational structures. By all accounts the psychiatrists who interviewed Eichmann attested to his “normalcy” and even remarked at some of the desirable qualities he exhibited with his family (p. 66). Eichmann was described as:

an unexceptional, dull, boringly ‘ordinary’ creature: someone you pass on a street without noticing. As a husband, father or neighbour he would hardly stand out from the crowd... He just, as we all do, preferred his own comfort to that of others. It is that common, *ordinary* malfeasance or lapse that at an *extraordinary* time leads to *extraordinary* results. (p. 67)

Their conclusion was that Eichmann was not unlike any one of us, outside the extraordinary circumstances of World War Two Germany. The conclusion Bauman draw from this is that under the right circumstances we all have the capacity to do evil and morally reprehensible things. The worst thing for our fears that we could come to understand about Eichmann was that he was not “the Devil”, not evil incarnate (p. 67). The worst idea is the realization of the threat within ourselves; this helps us come to the conclusion, out of that base level of fear, that no one is completely trustworthy. “Trust is in trouble the moment we know that evil may hide *anywhere*; that it does not stand out from the crowd, does not bear distinctive marks and carries no identity card” (2006, p. 67).

Everyone, though capable of evil, does not commit such atrocious acts, even under the extraordinary circumstances like those of Nazi Germany. The internal object that sparks the feelings of fear is the projection of our own evil possibilities onto other unknown human beings. The natural result is to live carefully, trusting few and fearing most. All the while we listen to the nightly news, the internet, or even just the sirens of police cars passing by in order to confirm our fears and beliefs that the world is not predictable. Actually it becomes predictable in the sense that everyone else poses a tangible threat and we must do what we can to prevent our fears from becoming real. Our culture of fear will persist as long as we listen; peddlers of fear will continue to operate in our midst and feed us with threats (real or imagined, almost always vague enough to be partially known) which prevent us from breaking a cycle of derivative fear. Thus, much like the ages of anxiety we experience a culture of fear will persist in our midst.

One final sociologist takes the “culture of fear” from mythical moniker to mainstream movement. Frank Furedi (2006) opened his book by saying that:

It is not hope but fear that excites and shapes the cultural imagination of the early twenty-first century. And indeed, fear is fast becoming a caricature itself. It is no longer simply an emotion, or a response to the perception of threat. It has become a cultural idiom through which we signal a sense of growing unease about our place in the world. (p. vii)

Besides the tantalizing juxtaposition between hope and fear, Furedi further supports the notion that fear is the lens through which many engage the world. When fear, as he suggests, becomes something that excites and shapes it becomes a part of a collective imagination. Fear is not only something we live by, but it also encompasses the way in which interpret the world. Thus, when given an object—be it terrorists, a killer avian flu, strangers, criminals, SUV’s rolling over, road rage, etc.—we place ourselves in a fear-based relationship with that object. We live as though it were a threat to our personal well-being and livelihood, regardless of the actuality of that threat impacting us. When we listen to media reports about a threat, we hear blanket not targeted information. A threat is broadcast to the entire viewing population which ultimately gives the impression of a widespread rather than localized phenomenon.

Furedi indicated that popular culture encourages “an expansive alarmist imagination through providing the public with a steady diet of fearful programmes about impending calamities – man-made and natural” (p. viii). Certainly, there are threats happening in the world that deserve the attention and heightened response the emotion of fear provides. However, Furedi suggests that frequently these fears are not born out of experience but rather born from television or movies (pp. ix-x). As we are increasingly subjected to global tragedy, global warming, global pandemics and other global threats

there is a “tendency to perceive human activity through a narrative that emphasizes its selfish, destructive and toxic behavior [which] underpins our culture of fear” (p. xiv). In this context, not only do we think that a stranger *might* do something threatening, but we behave as though we know that a stranger *is* a threat to us.

Together these authors construct a bleak assessment of the current cultural milieu. Each author points to the rapid rise in information dissemination as one signifier that a new culture of relationships is developing. These authors see the bombardment of threatening media reports as changing the culture and communities in which we work, play, and live. Their analysis points to how people react by fleeing or fighting a perceived present threat fed to them over the airwaves, internet, and cable channels. We still live in an “age of anxiety”, however in this current age things shifted. Threats to our safety and well-being are no longer apparitions we apprehensively anticipate in our imaginations. Instead, the proliferation of in-the-moment reporting gives us objects (real and imagined, nonetheless tangible) that focus our eyes on the threats to our lives. If one of the true tests of the difference between fear and anxiety is that fear has an object attached to it, then it seems clear we can no longer work with anxiety alone.

As care-givers, counselors, and pastors we must begin to understand fear (and its antidote) as it impacts the lives of our friends, families, parishioners, communities, communities of faith, and world. One particular strand of fear-based reactions seems important to therapeutic settings. In the final chapter of this dissertation, I assert that trauma is one event/object/threat that triggers the emotion of fear. Traumatic events affect the lives of millions of people each year (whether directly or vicariously) and we would be remiss if we did not begin to look at traumatic events through the lens of fear rather

than anxiety. Traumatic events arise through our relationship with a particular object. The initial behaviors associated with trauma mimic those of a fear-based response. In the final chapter of this work I will lay out my understanding of trauma as a fear-based “disorder”. In addition, I will examine hope as the antidote and undergirding force of the emotion of fear. Furthermore, by holding these two in relationship I will offer some clinical ideas for helping those who suffer from the effects of traumatic situations.

My Own Fear of Spiders

I am afraid of spiders. I can't wholly explain the origins of this fear and it has never reached a point of complete irrationality. However, I do what I can, all I can, to avoid contact with spiders. At ten years old I lived in an old house my parents were renovating in the suburbs of Atlanta, Georgia. Next door to this house was an overgrown vacant lot with a small pathway that led from back of the lot to the street out front. Often my friends and I would play games that involved running through the pathway from one end to the other.

One afternoon a friend and I were chasing each other through the vacant lot. We were both running as fast as we could down that narrow pathway. I was in front and he followed a few paces behind. As fast as we were going I have no idea how I saw what was in front of me. Coming around a bend in the pathway I saw a huge spider web with a large spider sitting right in the middle of it. I slammed on the brakes and stopped just short of the spider, its legs splayed across the net and yellow belly staring back at me. My friend couldn't stop in time and barreled into my back pushing me ever closer to the web. Time stopped as I hung precariously with arms raised, stomach sucked in, teetering on the tips of my toes. I didn't fall into the web or touch the spider; I didn't have to, for my

fear to be realized. My friend, smarting after smacking into my back, wondered what I was doing. He noticed the spider and took off running in the opposite direction, I followed closely behind him. My heart raced as the image was seared into my memory. I lived in that house for close to eight years and that is my main memory of that vacant lot. Even now I shudder at the ominous visions that lot forces into my consciousness. Even today I still hike with one eye on the trees and the other on the path in front of me in order to manage my sense of foreboding and the spiders that haunt my imagination.

I know the spider that day was a (relatively) harmless garden spider. It was not venomous and probably much smaller than I remember. I continue to this day to read nature stories about spiders in the hopes of one day overcoming my fear. However, I still get chills when I think about that story; my heart beats a little harder even as I write these words. I cannot explain my fear, yet it continues to affect my actions today. The first thing I do when entering a basement or attic is check the ceiling, walls, and corners to make sure no spider or web is above me. Even the feeling of a strand of spider web touching my skin sparks a mental and physical reaction that makes my skin crawl and long afterwards gives me the feeling that something is crawling on me. If I do encounter a spider I feel the need to either kill it (depending on its size) or flee the situation and let my spouse remove it. I have wasted large cans of insect killer attempting to kill spiders in closets and garages (even though I know spiders aren't technically insects). I am not anxious that a spider might bite me; I have convinced myself that any spider, given the chance, will bite me.

As you can see fear does interesting things to our minds, provided we give it the opportunity to free associate. My memory of that day on the pathway in the vacant lot

informed my lasting fear about spiders. Today, that memory (amongst other spider memories) feeds my present experiences when I enter places where spiders live (or lie in wait as I sometimes think about it). Thus, my memory, experience, and imagination has prepared my body to react to the eventuality that I will encounter a spider. I do not do this kind of preparation for snakes, bugs, or any other creepy crawling reptile, insect, or animal, only spiders. Is there anxiety involved in this situation? Sure. However, since there is an object to focus on and that object causes a particular behavioral reaction, I believe I am afraid.

Through my experiences I formed a conditioned reaction to spiders based on what seems, to me, to be a traumatic event in my life. The event, as part of the memory pathways in my brain, connects spiders with threats to my life. When I encounter another spider I react based on both memory and imagination through particular neural pathways in the brain. This causes me to either flee the situation calling for my spouse to come deal with the spider, or if I have rather thick shoes on (and I feel a little brave) I will stomp a spider. While my fear may be particular and even somewhat irrational, it is fear nonetheless and is a significant part of the way I live and move and have my being in this world. While immersion therapies could certainly provide possible relief of this reaction, it does not provide any sort of meaning for my fear. Removing a conditioned response does not help us understand the necessity of fear or the hope I believe it ultimately reveals. For us to begin to understand fear and its benefits for our life, we must find a therapeutic antidote that can help us make some meaning of the threats that haunt us. As this work continues I will make the case for hope to be that antidote and how it might be employed in therapeutic settings.

Summary

The deconstruction of anxiety helped me destabilize its meanings in order to shake loose the emotion of fear. While anxiety is important, through the deconstruction of its conceptual framework we see that there are meaningful differences between fear and anxiety. These differences include the temporal genesis of the emotional state, the antidote that alleviates discomfort caused fear or anxiety, the behavioral cues associated with a particular emotions and the presence of a real or imagined tangible object. While these emotional concepts are related, it is no longer the case that anxiety is the only appropriate emotion to examine in therapeutic settings. Even the cultural milieu has changed revealing a culture of fear that runs concurrently with the present age of anxiety.

Constant access to information about threatening objects abounds in the current cultural milieu, giving rise to this culture of fear. When people experience these threats, directly or indirectly, it creates an object or experience of an object which changes their patterns of behavior. Their fears call forth the expectation that they will (not may) be the next victims of the same threat. Sociologists Furedi and Bauman understand that the objects we fear are not only tangible real objects; but that culturally mitigated objects can also become a part of personal and cultural imaginative structures which lead to fear-based reactions in present moments (or an underlying derivative fear). Our baseline of fear has a damaging effect on our ability to relate to one another meaningfully. Over the course of the remaining chapters in this dissertation I want to present an understanding of fear useful for therapeutic conversation. This discussion will utilize neurological, narrative and theological perspectives to propose meanings about fear and its relationship to hope.

Chapter Three: The Neurophysiology of Fear and its Conservation in Human History

This chapter addresses the biological/physiological axis of the human emotion of fear. In this chapter I explore the emotion of fear utilizing neurophysiological and evolutionary data. Through neurophysiological data I will examine the notion that there is no such thing as a fearless individual (barring certain brain anomalies). Additionally, I will examine the emotion of fear through evolutionary sources. This helps contextualize the emotion of fear as a long-standing reaction to threats conserved throughout our evolutionary history. Utilizing dual inheritance evolutionary theory allows me to introduce an understanding of fear that lacks the reductionism of some other approaches to the emotion of fear. Together these two sources of knowledge provide a wealth of information concerning the embodiment of fear and the behavioral reactions related to it.

At the end of Chapter Two I described my fear of spiders. They are a threat that produces typical fear behaviors from me. When I encounter a spider two things happen, I recall memories and experiences with spiders, and my brain sends a particular set of reactions to the rest of my body. This dual reaction forms the foundation for these next two chapters. In this chapter I will mostly explore the emotion of fear. “Fear” or the “emotion of fear” pertains to the neurological and physiological reactions that occur when a person encounters a threat. In the next chapter I explore the subjective

foundations of our “fears”. These are the unique threats we fear as individuals based on our experiences and subjective interpretations of the world.⁶

Human beings are embodied creatures. An examination of the emotion of fear explores what it means to be a physical actor in a world that has both predictable and unpredictable threats. This chapter describes the emotion of fear as a physiological and behavioral reaction beginning in the brain and designed to help us survive and cope with experiences of threats in an unpredictable world. As subsequent chapters unfold, I will provide other interpretations of fear through subjective, narrative and theological lenses. My study of fear will conclude with an interpretation of its meaning utilizing a process theological framework. This meaning oriented conclusion sees fear as not only basic to survival, but adaptive and constructive, orienting us towards the things we hold important in our lives.

Neuropsychologist LeDoux (2002) hypothesized that fear is a physiologically based emotion “conserved to a large extent across human cultures” (p. 389). As long as there are stimuli in the environment that threatens our existence we will physiologically experience the emotion of fear. Try as we might, we cannot escape, rationalize or completely extinguish the emotion of fear from our lives. The emotion of fear is a necessary part of our embodied existence regardless of any attempts at resistance. For theologians to accept this hypothesis as valid, we must also wrestle with how the emotion of fear, as a physiological and evolutionary reality, can be seen as life-giving in the larger divine-human relational structure.

By exploring the physiological axis of the emotion of fear I am making the statement that part of our unique (yet sometimes similar) personhood is developed through our embodied selves. In part, to know someone is to understand the ways in which their bodies act and react to their contexts. By the same token, we are not our bodies alone. We have unique minds which interpret the world around us. We develop and devote ourselves to systems of meaning which shape our interpretive processes. Yet, we can do none of these things without a body, without some physical presence in the world. Understanding the physiological and evolutionary evidence related to the emotion of fear is one step in understanding the larger milieu through which fear operates. While neurophysiology and evolutionary patterns of conservation and behavior supply us with information about the emotion of fear, this research cannot tell us what it means to be afraid. It cannot tell us which things will threaten us; it cannot predict traumatic events or the association of threats with our experiences. It can predict what happens to our bodies when the emotion of fear is experienced. In order to understand fear, we should understand its importance in human functioning. We cannot short change this important aspect of our embodiment. So, this first step is important in providing a grounding framework through which the meaning of fear can be explored honestly.

This chapter is comprised of three sections. The first section describes a general understanding of the brain and its functioning. This includes specific structures of the brain related to the emotion of fear. In the second section, I examine one discipline which has sought to apply meanings to the evolution of the emotion of fear. I find their conclusions sorely lacking. Since the emotion of fear is conserved “to a large extent

across human cultures” (LeDoux, 2002, p. 389), evolutionary data plays an important role in understanding behaviors and the importance of the emotion itself. Therefore, I utilize dual inheritance theory to examine the emotion of fear from an evolutionary perspective. The final section of this chapter brings together neurophysiological, evolutionary and behavioral research in order to develop a complete understanding of how the emotion of fear is embodied in our active and reactive lives.

The Brain and our Reactions to Fear

The human brain is the most complex organic structure studied in human history. It is a mass of bundled cells and neurochemicals hidden behind a protective shell. The brain is responsible for sending electrochemical impulses through our nervous systems in order to arouse or inhibit particular functions. In addition to the semi-conscious acts, the brain also regulates temperature, heart rate and breathing without us ever having to actually “think” about doing these things. In addition to all of these regulatory functions, the brain shares a meaningful relationship with the mind, allowing for unique personalities and interpretive subjectivities to develop.

A study of the brain and its structures can provide us with valuable information about the common neural life of human beings. Biology professor Mark Dubin (2002) wrote that the brain is “the basis of our interactions with the world... it is the organ responsible for realizing there is a ‘me’ and there is a world that is different from me” (p. 1). There are two key words in this phrase, “organ” and “me”, which I interpret to mean “brain” and “mind”. While our interpretations and interactions with the world are complex and multifaceted, these interactions have one thing in common: their genesis in

the brain. To forgo knowledge concerning the brain for the pleasures of the mind is to miss a large part of what makes us human.⁷ Theologians, pastoral or otherwise, would be remiss if they do not at least begin to understand what neurophysiological research adds to our field of study. To know the brain, its organization, its functioning, its complexity and its design is to begin to know the God within us; as we come to know this complex structure, we begin to see how the brain experiences and remembers and responds down to the individual neuron and its purposes; we endeavor to understand how the brain senses the world and responds, but also how it functions creatively and imaginatively. As pastors and theologians, basic knowledge about the brain should not be the exception but the rule.

The Brain

It is easy to think of the brain like another organ, functioning as a single entity or system. This is true to a point. However, we should also understand that the brain is comprised of specific areas that perform specialized functions. Neuroscientist Joseph LeDoux (1996) remarked that “different faculties or functions are localized in different regions of the brain, and functional localization is now taken as an accepted fact” (p. 76). Contemporary advances in imaging techniques have allowed neurological researchers to map how particular parts of the brain respond to stimuli. At the same time we are learning about these functionally specific (localized) areas of the brain, it is apparent that these areas function as part of the larger organ that is the brain.

For example, our eyes are highly specialized parts of our bodies charged with receiving visual stimuli. They are connected via the optic nerve which extends to the

thalamus. The thalamus then passes the impulses to the back portion (occipital lobe) of the cerebral cortex. Simply reading this page causes our eyes to move back and forth (using parts of our brain stem to control their movement). Thankfully, much of the work between localized functions happens without conscious effort. We do not have to tell our brains to read and then send the signals along to the appropriate place for analysis. However, just moving our eyes and sending the stimuli along is not the end of the journey. Our brains, interpreting the visual stimuli as words, then sends the impulses to the correct portion of the brain (generally the left hemisphere) and they are placed in the context of our knowledge and experiences. These impulses might lead to the arousal of emotions; they may even spark creative thoughts or may cause a physiological sensation. Each subsequent reaction would involve a different structure and/or area of the brain which utilizes further corresponding connections to move the body into action.

If this visual pathway was damaged, then we would have severe difficulty with the initial phase of receiving a visual stimulus. We even might not be able to see the words on the page. If the damage occurred later in the journey, say in the language centers of the brain, the words might lose their meaning and/or interpretation. Any damage to these pathways⁸ might render the words we read meaningless. Another factor in this neural journey is the availability of the right neurotransmitters. The lack of specific neurotransmitters might inhibit impulses from reaching the appropriate destination in the brain. While simple, I hope this example underscores the necessity of localized functions which operate in a larger context to produce the results desired.

Understanding localization merely scratches the surface into what we know (and don't know) about the brain. What follows is three ways people have discussed the functioning of the brain. While the first two methods do not provide the level depth needed to fully examine the emotion of fear, they are nonetheless important ways of understanding the brain. The first method relates to hemispheric specificity. This method of understanding the brain is helpful, but it lacks an overall completeness by focusing on tasks related to cognitive functions of the brain. The second method of conceptualizing the brain is the triune brain theory. This theory organizes the brain around three epochs of development, attributing certain functions to a layer of the brain. The trouble with this theory is that it develops discrete areas of specialization where there is little to no evidence to support the claims. The most appropriate method of examining the brain is through its anatomy. While accurate, this method of looking at the brain comes across as piecemeal rather than a cohesive system.

Hemispheric specificity.

Hemispheric specificity examines the brain through its cognitive localizations. Wehrenberg and Prinz (2007) described the left hemisphere as the region of the brain where meaning making and verbal work take place, and the right hemisphere as responsible for emotional memory, creativity and spatial relations (p. 10). Neuroscientist Michael Gazzaniga noted that, "the left hemisphere is dominant for language, and speech is generated only from the left hemisphere... [it] is also specialized for processing written language although the right hemisphere does have a limited capacity for reading" (2005, p. 654). Moreover, the left hemisphere is generally responsible for organizing

information, recording events, and putting them in a sequence that pays attention to time. It is also responsible for forming verbal and mathematical symbols and giving them meanings related to experiences (Wehrenberg & Prinz, p. 10).

The right hemisphere reads the environment and interprets emotional content, helping provide a response to what it recognizes. The right side of the brain not only creates novel responses to emotional cues but also helps deal with practical situations using our imaginations (Wehrenberg & Prinz, p. 11). Gazzaniga reported that the right hemisphere is superior in completing tasks such as “part-whole relationships, spatial relationships, apparent motion detection, mental rotation, spatial matching, and mirror image discrimination” (2005, p. 654). As a theory of brain organization, hemispheric specificity provides helpful information related to the more sophisticated activities of the brain. As a complete concept it is limited. In fact it barely scratches the surface⁹ when it comes to understanding how the brain functions as a larger system with localized specialties.

The Triune Brain

The triune brain theory posits three sections to the brain: the reptilian, paleomammalian, and neomammalian. The reptilian brain forms the core of the triune brain which includes parts of the brain closest to the spinal column. The reptilian brain is responsible for basic life support functions and helps facilitate the gathering of sensory data. It also represents the earliest and oldest portions of the brain corresponding with of species who have a spine. The reptilian brain is considered highly specialized to maintain heart rate and breathing (among other things). It contributes little other than some

individual quirks to distinguishing a person from animal. The second brain, the paleomammalian brain, is an additional layer of neural matter encompassing the reptilian brain. This brain is associated with emotions and the interpretation of sensory data. The paleomammalian brain is similar in position and function across all species of mammals. This area of the brain is hypothesized to allow for the kind of memories which lead to some individuation. The final layer in the triune brain is the neomammalian brain, which consists of an outer layer encompassing the paleomammalian brain. This is the highly evolved layer of the brain which ultimately allows human beings (and some animals) to develop higher cognitive functions. The neomammalian brain also exercises control over some of the impulses of the other brains.

Each layer provide vital functions to carry out life for a specific animal. Thus, there is no sense that one “brain” is more primitive than another. Paul MacLean, who developed and researched much of the triune brain theory, believed that the “three evolutionary formations might be imagined as three interconnected biological computers, with each having its own special intelligence, its own subjectivity, its own sense of time and space, and its own memory, motor, and other functions” (1990, p. 9). MacLean’s work provides a consistent theory concerning the evolution of the brain across time. It also provides a greater connection between human beings and the animal world. However, this theory is not without its problems. The first and most important is that the triune brain theory seems to posit discrete groups of systems where they may not exist. Moreover, while there are centers of activity in the brain where specific functions occur, the operations of the brain are more complicated than just saying that a region or sub-

region is solely dedicated to a particular purpose and that purpose alone. Thus, while there is a great deal of certainty around the localization of functioning with different parts of the brain, care should be taken with how far we want to generalize this specialization across wide swaths of the brain (LeDoux, 1996, pp. 98-103).

Brain Anatomy.

Finally, the best way to understand the localization and system of the brain is by building a picture of the brain from the brainstem up (and out) to the cerebral cortex. Three anatomical parts help map the brain, the hindbrain, midbrain and forebrain. A fourth part, what is often known as the “limbic system” forms a ring around the top of the brainstem and sits in between it and the cerebral cortex. Neuropsychologist LeDoux (1996) characterizes the significance of these distinctive parts. He stated “As we ascend from hindbrain [through midbrain] to forebrain, the functions go from psychologically primitive to psychologically elaborate” (p. 82). Working our way up from the brain stem to the cerebral cortex we find that the brain is performing increasingly complex tasks, assuming that reason is the most complex of the tasks the brain performs.

The Hindbrain. Geographically, the pons, medulla oblongata and midbrain make up most of the brainstem; with the pons and medulla oblongata considered to be part of the hindbrain (Hendelman, 2006, p. 54). Additionally, the cerebellum (or little brain) is often included in discussions about the hindbrain. The pons connects the hind and midbrain and more importantly “affects physical arousal” (Wehrenberg & Prinz, 2007, p. 15). The pons controls blood pressure and serves an important role in the physical symptoms of anxiety, as well as playing a role in deep sleep patterns. The medulla

oblongata is one of the older structures of the brain, responsible for many of the unconscious activities of the brain, including respiratory functions and making sure the heart beats.

Little is known about the extent of the role and function of the cerebellum (p. 15). What is known is that it plays a role related to “balance, posture, walking... in integrating information... [and finally] it is assumed that the cerebellum plays important roles in dreaming, memory, and other functions” (2007, p. 15). Some other functions thought to occur in the cerebellum relate to different emotional states (See Sacchetti, Scelfo, & Strata, 2005; Turner et al., 2007).

The midbrain. The midbrain forms the top of the brain stem, and it is the smallest of the three anatomical designations. Neuroscientist Hendelman saw the midbrain as having a distinct role in motor activity, including a series of fibers associated with eye and neck movement. Moreover, the midbrain contains pain and temperature fibers as well as large bundles of axons which connect to several limbic structures along with other parts of the brain (pp. 176-178). Other than these functions, little else is known about the extent of functioning related to the midbrain.

The Forebrain. The forebrain is described as “The largest part of the brain, which includes the cerebral cortex and basal ganglia. The forebrain is credited with the highest intellectual functions” (Society for Neuroscience, 2006, p. 58). The functions of the cerebral cortex are often discussed with regard to the specialties of the left and right hemispheres. Much of the forebrain consists of the gyri and fissures (see note 9 for more about these terms) which make up the “folds” we see when looking at the outside of the

brain. In human beings, the cerebral cortex is responsible for advanced cognitive associations.

The basal ganglia consist of a set of three nuclei¹⁰ whose primary functions seem to revolve around the initiation and completion of tasks related to fine motor skills. Hendelman adds that “some of the structures of the basal ganglia are thought to influence cognitive aspects of motor control, helping to plan the sequence of tasks needed for purposeful activity” (2006, p. 66).¹¹ The amygdala is often considered an additional nucleus in the basal ganglia; however, because it also plays a significant role in the production of fear it is almost always discussed in the context of the limbic system.

The Limbic “System.”

The term “limbic system” may be a misnomer despite its persistence in neurological circles. The limbic structures have most commonly been associated with emotion; however, according to LeDoux (2000b) the concept of a “limbic system” “has come under attack both as an anatomical concept and as a theory of the emotional brain” (p. 290)¹². Through research into the limbic structures, it becomes clear that these parts may not actually function as a discrete “system” (see LeDoux, 1996, pp. 100-101). Despite the critiques of limbic system theories, the term and its associations persist in neuropsychological circles. LeDoux attributes the survival of the limbic system theory to one of two reasons, either (1) the need to give a name to the area between the hypothalamus and neocortex, or (2) evidence that some emotional functions come from structures in the limbic area, which is then generalized in order to verify that all of the structures are involved in the production of emotions (1996, pp.101-102). Much of the

debate concerning this area of the brain lies with the notion that no one can definitively state what parts of the brain make up the limbic system.

I choose to think about the limbic area as a set of structures rather than a distinct or cohesive system. This way of thinking maintains some of the ideas about localized functioning without over-generalizing. Furthermore, it takes seriously the interconnectedness of these structures with the rest of the brain. Semantically, I think it is easy to justify referring to the limbic system as “limbic structures”¹³. The term “limbic” describes the ring shaped geography of the area. Additionally, the term “structures” helps signify some independence while maintaining their proximity to one another. For our purposes, “limbic structures” may provide some additional precision, especially since we will focus on one particular structure in the limbic area.

Overall, I utilize the structures named by Wehrenberg & Prinz in their discussion concerning the limbic system (2007, p. 14). They named the hippocampus, thalamus, hypothalamus and amygdala as the primary structures in the limbic area and each of these structures share connections and function together in certain circumstances. While other structures might be included in an anatomy text, discussing these four structures fulfills the purpose of a general introduction on the brain. The thalamus, hypothalamus and hippocampus will serve as our introduction to the limbic structures, while the amygdala will receive some special attention due to its role regarding the emotion of fear.

In some descriptions of the limbic area, the thalamus is left off. Much like the amygdala it both is and isn't a part of the limbic structures. The thalamus actually sits in the middle of the limbic area and contains significant connections with the cerebral

cortex as well as other structures in the limbic area. Sitting on top of the brain stem, the thalamus acts as a central relay station for most external stimuli gathered by the senses.¹⁴ It then sends along the sensory information to the appropriate part of the brain for action (Al-Chalabi, Turner, & Delamont, 2006, p. 56). There are two additional features of the thalamus that are important to mention. First, the connections between it and the cerebral cortex are reciprocal, meaning the thalamus both sends and receives information from the cerebral cortex (Hendelman, 2006, p. 36). Reciprocity between the thalamus and cerebral cortex means that some sensory information becomes laden with higher associations before being sent on for a response. The thalamus also regulates brain waves and plays a role in sleep (Wehrenberg & Prinz, 2007, pp. 26-27).

Finally, the thalamus shares a direct connection with the amygdala. This enables sensory information to proceed quickly to the amygdala for emotional coding and reaction. Thus, when we are frightened by an unknown threat, the body can react quickly through this connection. Otherwise the sensory information would have to be processed by the thalamus, sent to the appropriate region of the cortex and then on to the amygdala for the appropriate response. This “early warning system” helps prepare the body in order to respond to stimuli quickly and appropriately (LeDoux, 1996, p. 165)

The second limbic structure is the hypothalamus, which sits towards the front and bottom of the thalamus. This tightly-packed group of nuclei performs a variety of autonomic functions including: the regulation of temperature, thirst and eating habits, heart rate and temperature (Citow & Macdonald, 2001, p. 147). Additionally, the hypothalamus plays a role in the sympathetic (action) and parasympathetic (rest) nervous

systems. It also has a direct connection to the amygdala, helping speed flight, fright and freeze actions when a threatening stimulus is recognized.

Finally, there is the hippocampus. The hippocampus is a complex structure that wraps around the thalamus, connecting to other limbic structures.¹⁵ It plays a role in the storage of memories, recording facts and events before they are transferred to other parts of the brain for long-term storage. It also plays a role in spatial orientation, helping with the navigation of complex environments (Hendelman, 2006, pp. 210-216). The hippocampus connects to the amygdala, hypothalamus and the cerebral cortex. Damage to the hippocampus generally reveals a deficit in the ability to form new episodic memories (Strange & Dolan, 2006).

The image in Figure 1 captures many of the anatomical structures discussed in this overview.

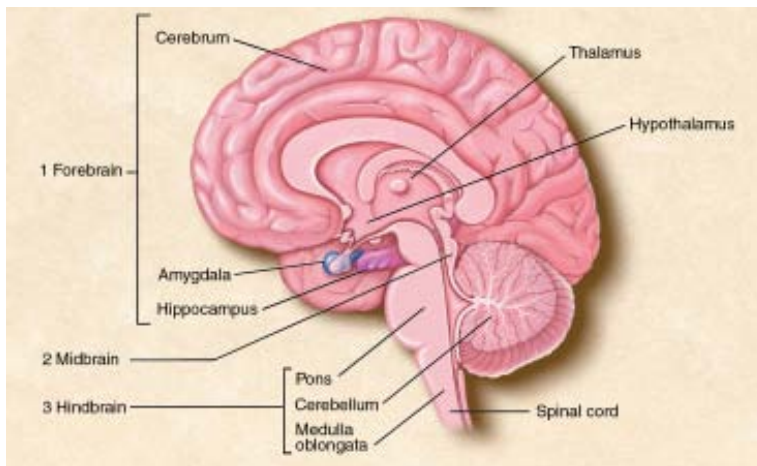


Figure 1. A Medial View of the Brain (image retrieved and adapted from *Brain Facts*, 2006, p. 5)

Beginning at the bottom, the hindbrain connects to the spinal cord and midbrain. This leads to the limbic area with the thalamus sitting on top of the midbrain. Finally, outside of the limbic area lies the forebrain. Looking at the image, it is also easy to see how one

might surmise discrete “systems” based on the geography of the brain. While localization is a reality, it is also apparent that the connections between structures are vital to the overall performance of the brain. The brain is a delicate and complex system and our knowledge of its inner-workings, though vast, does not compare to the mysteries that it still holds for us. Wehrenberg and Prinz offered this warning about brain research, “new studies about the brain become available at an astounding rate... Each new piece of research may cause us to review former assumptions about how the brain operates” (2007, p. 5). Though my general overview of the brain ends here, one limbic structure remains to be discussed, the amygdala.

The Amygdala – Structure, Connections and Functions.

The amygdalae are small bilateral structures¹⁶ located between the limbic structures and basal ganglia. Its name is derived from the Latin word for almond. From the image above we can see that they sit towards the front of the brain at the tip of the hippocampus. The amygdalae are made up of a number of nuclei which connect to different parts of the brain. This allows the amygdala to influence a variety of functions ranging from respiration and heart rate, to memory and stress responses to behaviors and thoughts (Hendelman, 2006; Wehrenberg & Prinz, 2007). While the thalamus is considered to be the central clearinghouse for sensory data (except olfactory senses which go straight to the amygdala), the amygdala is thought of as playing a central role in the coding of emotions with stimuli (Hendelman, 2006, p. 218).

More specifically, the amygdala has been shown to be active during the process of fear conditioning¹⁷ and the subsequent responses to the feeling of fear (Dubin, 2002;

Knight, Smith, Cheng, Stein & Helmstetter, 2004; LeDoux, 1996; Morrison, Allardyce & McKane, 2002). The myriad input and output connections implicate the amygdala in the genesis of defensive behaviors that signal the emotion of fear. What seems to be well established by current research is that the amygdala plays a significant role with regard to the emotion of fear as it relates to threats in the environment. Additionally, through its connections to the hippocampus and other cortical areas, the amygdala has a relationship to our memories.

The connection between memory and the amygdala is more explicit when the memory includes stimuli that arouse the emotions (Cahill, 2000; Fenker, Schott, Richardson-Klavehn, Heinze & Duzel, 2005; McGaugh, Ferry, Vazdarjanova & Roozendaal, 2000; Morrison, Allardyce & McKane, 2002; Strange & Dolan, 2006). This means that “the amygdala strengthens memory consolidation during times of strong emotion” (Miller, Taber, Gabbard & Hurley, 2005, p. 2). Thus, the amygdala aids in the emotional encoding of memories which are then stored elsewhere in the brain. These memories are thought to be more vivid, enduring and easily recalled due to the additional layer of emotional coding present at the time of their making (Cahill, 2000; Strange & Dolan, 2006). In this case, both positive and negative emotions seem to become correlated with memories in conjunction with an active amygdala.

Among the variety of neural pathways to and from the amygdala, two help us understand the ways in which the emotion of fear arises. The first is through a direct connection with the thalamus. This connection provides nearly instantaneous responses¹⁸ to possible threatening stimuli. We might think of the thalamo-amygdala pathway as the

interstate; whereas the second pathway, the thalamo-cortico-amygdala is closer to a highway. The thalamus is responsible for receiving sensory input and sending it along to the appropriate places in the brain. As an example, take reading this page. Our eyes scan the words, impulses head down the optic nerve through the thalamus which directs them on to the visual cortex. There is little emotional content to the words and so the amygdala is less active and doesn't need to be a part of the process. All of a sudden, out of the corner of your eye, you see an unrecognizable black figure creep along the edge of the table. In an instant that stimuli is recognized as unknown and possibly threatening. The thalamus sends the sensory data on two journeys.

The first journey is straight to the amygdala, which activates a series of defensive behaviors in order to act appropriately towards an imminent threat. LeDoux points out that "the information received from the thalamus is unfiltered and biased toward evoking responses" (1996, p. 165). This speedy connection enables the brain to prepare the body for either fight or flight. When this happens, you might feel your body tense (or freeze) as your muscles prepare for movement or action. Your heart rate might increase a little and you may feel your skin grow cold as you sweat and your blood flow is diverted.

At the same time the sensory information is sent through cortical pathways in order to identify the stimulus. The stimulus is checked against the memory of threatening objects and that information is then sent along to the amygdala as well. This longer pathway serves to keep the amygdala in check so that we aren't jumping at every shadow. So when our body freezes and we tense up our eyes dart to the object to ascertain level of threat that it poses. If we see that the object is nothing more than a piece of fuzz blowing

across the table then the body will relax and we can draw our attention back to the tasks at hand. However, if the object turns out to be a black widow spider and our best recourse is to run away, then the thalamo-amygdala pathway has already prepared our body for escape (of course if we didn't think we could escape we might also pick up a book and squash the spider).

To conclude, we know that barring a disruption in the normal formation of the brain everyone has an amygdala. In those people who have experienced lesions or damage to the nuclei of the amygdala there is a deficit in their ability to recognize threats and experience the emotion of fear (Tranel, Gullickson, Kock & Adolphs, 2006). The amygdala also plays a role in the emotional encoding of memories which is thought to intensify them, enable them to last longer and be more easily recalled. Additionally, this body of nuclei displays a vast array of interconnections with the rest of brain enabling it to directly influence behavior among other physiological functions. The amygdala is a central source for the emotion of and behaviors associated with fear. What we can surmise from all of this data about the brain in general and the amygdala in particular is that only in extreme cases do we find a fearless individual. Fear is a normal part of human functioning, and indeed a necessary part of our humanity. The necessity of the emotion of fear can be seen through its conservation in our evolutionary history.

Evolution, Psychology and Fear

Evolutionary Psychology and the Evolved Fear Module

Evolutionary psychology is a discipline which provides hypotheses about emotions and their conservation in human evolution. As a discipline, evolutionary

psychology describes “human functioning from an adaptationist perspective, examining the mental mechanisms that evolved to solve problems faced in our ancestral past and how those mechanisms continue to produce behavior today” (Salmon & Crawford, 2008, p. 1). Evolutionary psychology is a discipline designed to unravel the mysteries of human nature and provide some guidance and thought into how our brains and minds adapted to a changing and often unpredictable environment. According to Salmon and Crawford most people involved with evolutionary psychology would agree to six assumptions that guide the field. These assumptions are

1. Human behavior can (and should) be explained at both a proximate and ultimate level of analysis;
2. Domain specificity, that adaptive problems are solved through specific designated physical and behavioral structures or mental modules;
3. These mental mechanisms are innate; there is no genetic variation in them between people (except for those differences between the sexes related to differences in the ancestral problems they faced);
4. Human nature is explained best as the product of genes and environment;
5. The workings of most mental mechanisms are not available to consciousness; and
6. There are differences between the current and ancestral environment that may influence the functioning or outcome of evolved mechanisms (some Darwinian anthropologists discount this difference). (p. 13)

Briefly, the first assumption gives us the purpose of evolutionary psychology, to explain human behavior at individual and collective levels. The third assumption proposes that there is homogeneity of structure and behavior within species, allowing for some evolved differences between the sexes. The fourth assumption posits that human beings act out of a combination of our biological heritage and environmental structures. That is, we have

been preprogrammed to a certain extent to respond to different environmental cues and those same environmental cues help shape and re-shape our programming. The fifth assumption reminds us that much of our activity and identity stems from unconscious mental processes. The sixth assumption makes clear that because our environment is different than our biological ancestors that the same mental mechanisms they used may acquire a different shape in this contemporary environment.

Returning to the second assumption, it basically describes designated modules of the brain that have evolved throughout the eons to deal with specific issues in the environment. The principle behind this assertion is that “evolutionary processes shape brain mechanisms and brain mechanisms shape behavior” (Barrett, 2008, p. 173). These mechanisms can be thought of as specialized units that play “a causal role in guiding behavior on the basis of neurally coded information” (p. 174). This means that dedicated portions of the brain guide behaviors based on pre-coded information through specialized structures or systems developed and passed down in our evolutionary history. Furthermore, these modules are **not** expected “to operate in isolation from other systems because a key value of specialization is that it leads to flexibility and computational power when modules interact” (p. 174). The thrust of the modular theory seems to be that the brain has intelligently evolved capacities which enable it to recognize various cues within the environment and react to those cues without using too much brain power. Because of these unconscious modules the brain is free to utilize the excess energy for other tasks as they present themselves.

Evolutionary psychology, while intriguing, is often characterized as over-stating what can truly be said about the human brain and the development of the mind. The brief introduction presented here grounds us in the basics of evolutionary psychology. Even though I disagree with most of what is proposed in the forthcoming evolved fear module, it is important engage disciplines that capture the imaginations of psychologists and researchers. Evolution is important to our understanding of fear. However, the evolved fear module may not be the best way to characterize that importance. The remainder of this section presents the evidence for an evolved fear module. I will then develop two criteria which can be used to critique and test the hypotheses of evolutionary psychologists. At the conclusion of this section I provide a critique of the evolved fear module based on the criteria previously developed.

The Evolved Fear Module.

Evolutionary psychologists Mineka and Öhman argued that the evolved fear module is

a relatively independent mental, behavioral, and neural system that was specifically tailored by evolutionary pressures to help solve problems of adapting to dangerous and potentially life-threatening situations frequently encountered in the ecology of our early mammalian evolutionary ancestors. (p. 928-929)

For the authors, “fear originates in defensive behavior systems that have helped organisms to cope with different types of survival threats” (p. 927). Rather than devote conscious brain power to the constant scanning of the environment for threats, a fear module evolved allowing the brain to relegate the tasks of threat recognition and response to the unconscious. This module is revealed through four components.

The first component is selectivity of input, which describes the emotion of fear as “especially sensitive to stimuli that seem to have been associated with recurring threatening situations in mammalian evolutionary history” (p. 928). The authors contend that human brains contain genetically coded instructions concerning particular evolutionary threats. Activation of these evolutionary threats (such as spiders and snakes) occurs either innately or through mild conditioning such as being told to fear an object. To back up this claim the authors point to research which shows that phylogenetic¹⁹ threats tend to have stronger associations and are harder to extinguish once activated (pp. 930-931). This does not mean that ontogenetic threats are irrelevant to the evolved fear module, but that there is a preference for phylogenetic threat.

The second characteristic, automaticity, describes the evolved fear module’s “tendency to be preferentially activated automatically by fear-relevant stimuli” (p. 932). One way we might understand this claim is by highlighting the thalamo-amygdala pathway, which begins the process of a fear reaction before a cognitive appraisal of a threat is made. However, the authors are claiming a bit more than just a dedicated pathway between the thalamus and the amygdala. They claim that the evolved fear module constantly scans the environment for threats and reacts almost instantly when a threat appears. Without the burdens of cognitive awareness of a threat, this module provides us with the opportunity to rapidly escape from threats. To back up this claim the authors point to the structural evolution of the brain in nonhuman species and their ability to scan and react to threats in the environment rapidly. They also point to some of their

own research using subliminal images of feared objects which elicited a conditioned fear response (p. 932).

The third characteristic of the evolved fear module is encapsulation from higher cognitive processes. Mineka and Öhman state that “Encapsulation refers more to the relative independence and resistance of the fear response, once initiated, to conscious cognitive control” (p. 932). Phobias are a type of fear response where clients self-report the inability to gain cognitive control of their fears despite the knowledge of their irrationality. Furthermore, the same research into automaticity provides some support for the claim that fear responses are relatively independent of the cognitive domain.

The final characteristic that the authors posit for their fear module is distinct neural circuitry present in other mammals and separate from the sections of the brain that perform higher cognitive tasks. The authors contend that this dedicated neural circuitry is found in the amygdala and its connections. Mineka and Öhman’s assertions about an evolved fear module seem believable. However, as we will come to see, their theory is not without its problems.

Before delving into critiques of the evolved fear module, I want to make a clear statement about evolution in general. I take the theory of evolution to be the best available scientific representation of how human beings came to be a part of this world. My approval of this theory does not mean that the theory provides a complete explanation; however it is the best available theory given the scientific data available to us. Second, believing evolution is the best available theory does not exclude believing in God, and God’s persuasive power. Theologian Griffin’s work (2000; 2001; 2004) on

religion and scientific naturalism proposes an alternative to mechanistic science called theistic naturalism. Theistic naturalism allows for the movement and mystery of God at the most basic levels of the functioning world²⁰. Through the belief that God is *in* all (panentheism) and that God persuades rather than commands events into being we can speculate about some of the mystery of how complex objects evolve when science tells us most objects tend toward simplicity.

Critiquing Evolutionary Psychology.

Evolutionary psychologists Duntley and Buss proposed that “evolutionary psychology provides a unifying metatheory for the currently disparate and disconnected branches of psychology” (2008, p. 31). In an age where there is a healthy skepticism about anything that proposes to unify everything, there will be no shortage of critics. Evolutionary psychology has been critiqued by philosophers, anthropologists, behaviorists and psychologists. These critiques range from problems with specific claims to meta-critiques of the entire discipline. Using the work of philosopher Richardson two criteria interrogate the claims related to the evolved fear module. His primary concerns are related to the evidence used to propose specific modules and the manner in which history is used to support claims.

Richardson declared that “evolutionary psychology as currently practiced is often speculation disguised as results. We should regard it as such” (2007, p. 12). According to Richardson, evolutionary psychology claims that “psychological processes are adaptations, not to present circumstance, but to our ancestral environment. The fact that they are adaptations, in turn, is supposed to explain and ground our psychological

capacities” (p. 13). According to evolutionary psychologists, the capacities we exhibit today have little to do with ontogeny, those things that have happened since birth, save when those things trigger our phylogenic psychological capacities. When evolutionary psychology claims we are products of our genes and environment, the environment to which they often refer is that of the Pleistocene period. Our ancestors of this “epoch spanning 1.8 million to 10,000 years ago” lived “in small hunter-gatherer groups, but only the past 10,000 years living as agriculturists and the past couple hundred years living in industrial societies” (Buller, 2005, p. 9).

Richardson’s major argument with evolutionary psychology is with its status as an *evolutionary* discipline. Two of his critiques develop out of methodological concerns. Richardson expected that through evolutionary research “we should expect sound evidence; and, for theories that matter more, we should expect better evidence. We should expect more from theories that matter more” (2007, p. 34). For Richardson there is no more important theory than the one purporting to explain human beings, something evolutionary psychology purports to do. Therefore, the theoretical output of evolutionary psychologists should utilize a higher standard in choosing the evidence that backs up their claims. This evidence should be solid, taking into account and explaining dissenting evidence when necessary.

A second methodological critique Richardson suggests is related to the historical turn. That is, given what we understand about pre-historical human beings, does the evidence work? The historical turn, according to Richardson, is vital to any evolutionary argument. Richardson claimed that there was an integral relationship between form,

function and history. We can see the current form of something and infer some of its functional components. The historical turn is an attempt to connect this form and its functions to historical human beings in order to explain how this function has been selected *for* through eons of growth and change. As Richardson put it, “The historical turn is crucial for evolutionary reasoning. Form follows function, but only contingent on history” (p. 53). Looking at the evolved fear module, the claim is that dedicated circuitry developed out of the behaviors and associated feelings of fear related to threats. Those hominids with the behaviors and associated circuitry would be the survivors and produce enough offspring with similar circuitry that it became a ubiquitous feature of our evolution. Therefore, data from the historical turn should reveal that some Pleistocene era hominids did not possess the brain circuitry related to the production of fear. Moreover, those with fear circuitry had to possess a distinct advantage and thus procreated more often. This would effectively extinguish any line of hominid without the associated brain circuitry and behaviors related to fear. The question here is can we effectively validate any of these claims?

The Evolved Fear Module, Revisited.

Evidence.

The first criterion I will use to revisit the evolved fear module examines the evidence used to prove its existence. Utilizing the four characteristics that make up the evolved fear module – selectivity of input, automaticity, encapsulation and distinct neural circuitry – I will examine evidence which refutes and/or corroborates this module. The guiding assumption for evidentiary claims is that because we are developing theories

about human beings, then the evidence supporting these claims should be held to a higher standard.

Beginning with selectivity of input and automaticity, the authors believe that the evolved fear module is specifically tuned in to those threats that were most relevant to our Pleistocene ancestors. Additionally, the module is automatically and unconsciously scanning the environment for threats. They offer snakes and spiders as two phylogenetic threats that persist in contemporary human beings and induce automatic reactions.

Current research calls the full veracity of this claim into question.

Blanchette (2006) found that phylogenetic and ontogenetic fears have a similar response time. Her research revealed that

efficient detection of threat is not restricted to targets that have high evolutionary significance—which our brains could have been prepared to detect specifically. Rather, it extends to stimuli that evoke threat but that did not threaten survival at the time that our brains were shaped by evolution. (2006, p. 1499)

What she found was that ontogenetic threats (guns and syringes in this study) are identified as quickly as phylogenetic threats (snakes and spiders). Blanchette hypothesized that the urban location of her research subjects may have conditioned them to believe that “evolutionary irrelevant” items may be more threatening than “evolutionary relevant” items. To support this claim, researchers Lipp, Derakshan, Waters and Logies failed to find “evidence for preferential processing of phylogenetic fear-relevant stimuli” (p. 248). In their study they utilized visual detection tests in order to examine responsiveness to particular stimuli. Their results indicated “that among backgrounds of flowers and mushrooms, pictures of all animals are found faster” (p. 248). They are quick to state that this does not disprove the selectivity of input

hypothesis, but it does complicate the evidentiary claims. Researchers Fox, Griggs and Mouchlianitis (2007) also sought to find out whether there was any difference between the detection of snakes and guns in a neutral environment. Their results were consistent with Blanchette's findings that phylogenetic and ontogenetic threats are found without preference for one or the other. Two helpful conclusions came as a result of this study.

First, related to selectivity of input the authors demonstrated:

that the efficient detection of threat was not restricted to phylogenetic stimuli in a visual search task... it was not the case that the snake stimuli were detected faster than guns, as would be expected by the hypothesis that an evolved fear module can be preferentially accessed by phylogenetic stimuli. (p. 695)

These findings call into question the reality of an evolved fear module as it relates to selectivity of input. The research on automaticity provides a different result. The same authors found that "highly relevant stimuli (e.g., stimuli indicating potential danger) are likely to capture attentional processes and gain priority in terms of speed of processing" (p. 696). Researchers Dolan and Vuilleumier also found that "Strong empirical evidence now exists which indicates a high degree of automaticity in the amygdala processing of sensory stimuli that signal fear" (2003, p. 353). The amygdala plays a role in the processing of stimuli in the environment and a more specific role in the processing of threats. The most convincing evidence for the automatic fear responses of the amygdala related is the direct connection between the thalamus and the amygdala. This pathway helps us understand the possibilities related to automaticity regardless of the evidence for an evolved fear module. The question that remains is whether the automaticity relates just to threats or to relevant stimuli in the environment.

The final two characteristics proposed by Mineka and Öhman refer to the encapsulation of the evolved fear module from higher cognitive processes and distinct neural circuitry for a fear response. While the direct route between the thalamus and amygdala seems to support evidence of automaticity, the second pathway through the cortical structures would seem to mitigate some threats. The juxtaposition of these two neural pathways seems to corroborate and destabilize Mineka and Öhman's claims. There is some relatively isolated circuitry used to heighten the body's awareness of a possible threat. At the same time, this circuitry is not completely encapsulated from higher cognitive processes. Instead of always reacting to the impulses through the thalamo-amygdala pathway, we often inhibit fear responses through a cognitive interpretation of the stimulus. The evidence of these two possible interpretive schemas calls into question the full encapsulation of an evolved fear module from higher cognitive processes.

Furthermore, the amygdala does not just play a role in the production of fear. It also plays some role in memory and other basic emotional responses. Mineka and Öhman's understand the term distinct to mean that the amygdala would be involved with the production of fear and no other emotions (2001, p. 934). However, what we know about the amygdala today is that it plays a role in the emotional coding of positive and negative *emotional* memories. Moreover, evidence points to the amygdala as playing a role in positive emotions and reward (Baxter & Murray, 2002; Murray, 2007; Sergerie, Chochol & Armony, 2008). Thus, new neurological evidence does not fully support the idea of distinct neural circuitry upon which the evolved fear module is posited. The amygdala is much more complicated despite its distinct role in the production of fear.

From an evidentiary perspective, the evolved fear module falls short. The evidence from neuropsychological research supports only one of the characteristics of Mineka and Öhman's evolved fear module, automaticity. There is some partial corroboration of the concept of encapsulation and distinct neural circuitry. The concept that phylogenetic threats are activated more quickly than ontogenetic threats seems to have been refuted. As for meeting the criteria of an attainable standard of proof, the evolved fear module falls well short of its theoretical promise.

The Historical Turn.

The second criteria relates to the deftness with which the authors of the evolved fear module make their historical turn. The historical turn is a vital part of evolutionary theory, revealing the connection between form, function and history. Any appeal to design, selection or adaptation would need to look back and find the circumstances under which something was selected *for*. Not only is this a historical journey, but it is also a journey that questions the distinct advantage an evolved fear module might give one hominid over another without it. For a specific design to be proven to exist, evidence of the historical turn must be “supplemented and augmented in a variety of ways, considerations of design are inconclusive and likely misleading” (2007, p. 52).

As conceived by Mineka and Öhman, the evolved fear module lacks the support necessary to prove its existence. Thus, the structure cannot be selected *for* because given the current evidence there is no structure to be selected. Despite this knowledge, I want to continue to examine the historical turn the authors utilize to see if it helps understand what might have been selected *for* in the evolution of human beings.

Mineka and Öhman seem to take history for granted when they set out to describe the evolved fear module. Their historical turn takes up less than a page and seems to point to the conservation of fear and fear responses rather than a distinct module. For them, “Evidence of such shaping by evolutionary contingencies is obvious if we examine characteristics of fear and fear conditioning in humans” (2001, p. 927). However, they base much of their historical argument on the notion that phylogenetic threats are more prone to elicit automatic fear responses than ontogenic threats. The authors understand that fear and fear responses were relevant to our evolutionary ancestors, allowing for an immediate reaction to threatening stimuli in the environment. These mechanisms and behaviors associated with fear helped our ancestors to survive and cope with threats. As the authors stated

Fear motivates organisms to escape and avoid sources of danger and threat with very fast, sometimes even split-second,... activation of defensive behaviors, as was necessary for survival in early evolutionary environments in which disasters could strike fast and without warning. (p. 927)

Our capability of experiencing fear provides us with a greater opportunity to survive in the face of unexpected threats. For an evolutionary argument to work, supplementation from other sources is necessary. Additionally, they must show that their module was selected *for* during our evolutionary past. In their article, there is no evidence presented that shows how this module might have been selected *for* over and against those who had different or no fear structures or behaviors. To the authors’ credit, I believe this paper was an initial hypothesis intended to pull research together for further study. However, the responsibility for supporting the historical turn in their propositions about human functioning falls well short of proof of its existence and selection.

In conclusion, I think we can put the evolved fear module to rest. Based on the evidence, the evolved fear module falls well short of its anticipated promise. There is a wide range of evidence dismissing three of the four assumptions. Furthermore, there is a distinct lack of a historical turn which would help show how this module might have been selected *for* in our evolutionary past. While I am sure the discipline of evolutionary psychology can claim a variety of successes, I am also sure that the evolved fear module is not one of them. Despite the module's lack of relevance, I do not think we should be deterred from utilizing evolutionary data to help us fully understand the emotion of fear.

The Emotion of Fear

Fear, like any emotion, can be conceptualized as both a feeling and a certain range of physiological and behavioral criteria. Neuropsychologists Johnson and LeDoux (2004) wrote that there are two ways to conceptualize fear, “subjective states (the feeling of fear) and bodily responses (behavioral, autonomic, and endocrine changes) elicited by threatening stimuli” (p. 228). This discussion of the emotion of fear relates to the bodily responses associated with threatening stimuli.²¹ The next chapter will examine the feeling or subjective state of fear.

For the remainder of this chapter my goal is to explore the ways in which fear manifests through a variety of physiological changes related to the experience of a threat. An additional goal will be to examine fear as an evolutionarily conserved emotion with contemporary meanings and purposes. As a result of these explorations, I will propose two meaning-oriented categories related to the emotion of fear. If, as LeDoux (2002) reminds us, fear is a physiologically based emotion “conserved to a large extent across

human cultures” (p. 389), then my assumption as a theologian and clinician is that it serves an important role in the ways human beings interact with the world. Understanding these physiological and behavioral reactions provides pastoral counselors and caregivers with a powerful educational tool which can normalize some of the experiences people feel following a threatening experience.

The structure of the remainder of this chapter is as follows. First, I will summarize the role of the amygdala in the production of fear. I then turn to discuss the physiological sensations associated with the emotion of fear. The physiological changes directly impact the behavioral expressions of fear. These behaviors are thought to be conserved across a wide swath of species, including human beings. After examining the defensive behaviors associated with the emotion of fear, I want to explore the threats that make fear necessary. This opens the discussion to the evolutionary influences on the emotion of fear. This discussion will consist of a specific examination concerning how threats arise and continue. Second, I will look at the rise of our defensive behaviors. Finally, I end this chapter with a summary definition of fear and brief discussion of the emotion of fear and its possible theological meanings.

The Amygdala and the Physiology of Fear.

LeDoux (1998) thought, “The key to the fear pathways in the brain is a small region called the amygdala” (p. 1229). The amygdala is widely connected to other parts of the brain including higher cognitive functions, sensory input areas and autonomic functions. Additionally, the amygdala plays a role in emotional memory and the regulation of positive and negative emotions. Finally, there is evidence of two routes

through which the amygdala receives its input. What remains to be seen is how the amygdala utilizes the information it gets in order to produce an appropriate reaction to stimuli in the environment. Current research and meta-analyses have transformed the view that the amygdala only performs the function of recognizing threats in the environment. There is some indication now that the amygdala may perform a broader function of recognizing general behaviorally relevant stimuli in the environment (Ousdal et al., 2008; Sergerie, Chochol & Armony, 2008). These findings underscore the importance of the amygdala in recognizing when relevant stimuli require a response. Thus, rather than only having implications for fear-relevant stimuli, the amygdala detects socially and/or behaviorally relevant stimuli (Dolan & Vuilleumier, 2003; Sergerie, Chochol & Armony, 2008). It seems that the amygdala plays an important role as an initial interpreter of the emotional substance of a stimulus, and whether that stimulus requires a particular set of behavioral responses.

Focusing on the emotion of fear, the amygdala is known to play a vital role in helping us recognize and react swiftly to threats in the environment. As an emotional encoder, the amygdala is responsible for helping us stamp particular stimuli with the emotion of fear. Bush, Sotres-Bayon, and LeDoux (2007) stated that “Fear memories remain potent for long periods, possibly even throughout the lifespan..., but the potency of fear memory can be reduced through extinction” (p. 414). This means that what we emotionally code as a threat in our memories can be an enduring phenomenon whose reactive qualities can be reduced but not completely extinguished. Thinking about the amygdala we see that it plays a vital role in the acquisition and encoding of fear relevant

stimuli. The next thing we must understand is how it utilizes this information to physiologically produce the emotion of fear.

The amygdala is connected to the midbrain and other areas which oversee a variety of physiological functions. Through these connections the amygdala is capable of influencing these systems to help produce specific physiological reactions. One of the first things the amygdala can do when a threat arises is focus our attention. It does so by way of directing the sensory input through the cortical areas of the brain (LeDoux, 2000a). When we are threatened our brain focuses intently on the threat, allowing us to prepare for a reaction without distraction. This focus helps us concentrate on retrieving any memories associated with the stimulus in order to develop an appropriate response. Additionally, the amygdala may play a role in learning and/or social judgments (Miller, Taber, Gabbard & Hurley, 2005).

When we encounter a threat the pathway between the thalamus and the amygdala goes into high gear, while the cortical connections work to catch-up. The automatic signals focus our attention and senses, helping us prepare for immediate action if needed. In the moment that we “freeze” for our attentional response, our heart starts pounding, blood flow increases and our body tenses (Dozier, Jr., 1998; LeDoux, 1996). Our hands and feet become clammy, and the blood in our face diverts into more defensive muscles leaving us “pale as a ghost.” The pupils dilate allowing us to take in more of our surroundings and a variety of hormones are released into the blood stream heightening our sensitivity. The nerves in our gut shut down the digestive system and our mouths dry while all available energy is devoted to respond to a threat (Dozier, Jr., 1998). As we

assess the situation, the amygdala connects with the cerebral cortex to search the memory for possible previous threats in order to develop a plan of action. By this time though, the body is completely prepared to act just in case this is a new threat and our survival is at stake. If the threat abates, then the amygdala tags the experience with the appropriate emotion and stores it for recall should another similar situation arise. A lot happens when our defensive system goes into action; almost all of it happens before we can even fully grasp the scope of a threat. Thus, in the service of survival our brain prepares our bodies for a particular set of reactions to a threat. These reactions are often termed defensive behaviors.

Before continuing, I want to continue to develop the notion that the emotion of fear and anxiety are meaningfully separable emotions. Given how the amygdala works, I want to put forth a hypothesis that sees our remembered fears as the genesis of some anxiety in the brain. Basically, I am beginning to think of anxiety as generated by leftover reverberations of fear associated memories which produce apprehensive anticipations of possible dire consequences. In essence, the fear-coded memories “bleed out” so that what might have once been coded with a particular threat now gets associated with diffuse possibilities in the environment. Some interesting research has posited that interactions between the amygdala and prefrontal circuits of the brain play a large role in anxiety production (Bishop, 2007; Davidson, 2002). While this research doesn’t necessarily prove my hypothesis, it does shed light on the role of the amygdala in anxiety and fear. To me, this helps the argument that fear and anxiety share similarities and differences despite their constant use as interchangeable terms. Psychologist Bishop (2007) defined

the two terms this way: “Fear is viewed as a biologically adaptive physiological and behavioral response to the actual or anticipated occurrence of an explicit threatening stimulus. *Anxiety crucially involves uncertainty as to the expectancy of threat, is triggered by less explicit or more generalized cues, and is characterized by a more diffuse state of distress, with symptoms of hyperarousal and worry*” (p. 307, italics mine).

Fear and Defensive Behaviors.

Defensive behaviors are the programmed responses to threats in our environments. As our bodies prepare to respond to a threat, the number of possible reactions narrows as we seek to survive. LeDoux described these behaviors as “the operation of brain systems that have been programmed by evolution to deal with danger in routine ways” (1996, p. 128). While we may have some conscious control of the depth and breadth of a reaction, the behaviors themselves seem fairly common. Experimental psychologist Marks lists four main responses to threats. These four behaviors include: withdrawal, immobility, aggressive defense and appeasement. In his research, Marks saw that “Relatively few differences are seen in fear behavior displayed inter- or intraspecifically” (1987, p. 53). Thus, the specific strategies utilized in the face of danger tend to follow a similar pattern regardless of species. Again, the depth and breadth of the response to a threat will differ based on type of threat and the degree to which it is aversive. LeDoux remarked that,

In spite of the fact that species can have their own special ways of responding to danger, commonality of functional patterns is the rule... what distinguishes fear reactions in humans and other animals is not so much the ways in which fear is expressed as the different kinds of trigger stimuli that activate the appraisal mechanism of the defense system. (1996, p. 133)

Human beings will react with one of these predictable patterns of behavior when encountering a threat. In order to fully understand the emotion of fear, exploring these behavioral patterns is important.

Withdrawal is synonymous with the terms flight, escape and/or avoidance. To understand the pervasiveness of this defensive behavior, Marks stated that

Even one-celled organisms show the phenomena of withdrawal from danger, habituation to repeated stimulation, and simple learning, all of which occur throughout the animal kingdom and help the organism regulate its relationship to its environment. (1987, p. 53)

As species developed into more complex multi-cellular organisms withdrawal continued to be an important evolutionary tool for survival. Moreover, humans, who view their environments through complex systems of interpretation, memory and meaning have developed manners of withdrawal that range significantly. Humans are mobile creatures with the mental tools for creating new pathways which allow us to avoid remembered places or objects; we also withdraw internally from threats, shielding our selves from damage when physical escape is not possible. The avoidance of a remembered threat is a mechanism often used to relieve the discomfort of the emotion of fear. Sometimes, the best way to survive is not to put oneself in the path of dangerous objects. However, sometimes dangerous objects can't be avoided.

Immobility, or freezing, is described by Marks as coming in two flavors, tonic and attentive. Attentive immobility is when the brain focuses our attention on a threat. This type of immobility serves the purpose of assessing a threat. Attentive immobility also limits movement in order to "hide" a fearful animal from a possible threat. This behavior can last minutes to hours depending upon the threat. The purpose of attentive immobility

is to provide time for additional defensive behaviors or to escape from a threat by means of hiding. Tonic immobility is described by Marks as “an extreme fear reaction in which the animal or person is ‘scared stiff’ and unresponsive to even painful or other intense stimulation” (1987, pp. 60-61). This form of immobility is an abrupt paralyzing sensation whereby the person is conscious but unable to move in response to a threat. Marks lists three experiences where this kind of immobility has been documented: (1) in rape victims, (2) in shell-shocked soldiers, and (3) in people attacked by wild animals.

Physiologically, those experiencing tonic immobility still remain conscious of their surroundings, yet they exhibit slowed heart rates which can lead to fainting in extreme cases (1987, pp. 68-69). Though being “scared to death” has quite the colloquial meaning today, Marks points to some cases where he believes tonic immobility has led to heart problems and ultimately death (1987, p. 69). Tonic immobility suggests that some threats can be overwhelming making active responses difficult. This doesn’t mean that we don’t respond. Marks remarked that “Recovery often occurs with abrupt explosion into vigorous activity, commonly with lightning escape or attack” (1987, p. 64). I understand both forms of immobility as defensive behaviors that provide the time needed in order to act appropriately in relationship to a threat. As such, immobility takes the form of attentive examination, hiding or retreating into a shell in order to protect and ready oneself for action.

A third ubiquitous defensive behavior is aggressive defense or fighting. Often aggressive defense comes with a variety of display patterns intended to make a predator think twice before attacking. Generally these display patterns provide an extra moment so

that the “prey” might escape the situation. The goal of escape separates this behavior from others associated with pure aggression or fighting. In humans, when a threat becomes real and escape is not immediately possible, we resort to standing tall. We increase our physical footprint or stare down an opponent in the hopes they back off; we may also search our immediate area for a weapon in order to change the dynamic of the situation. Marks noted that “Bluff has always been a common human strategy to ward off attack, and disguise to elude capture” (1987, p. 72). The term “fight” takes on a different meaning when we think of it in the service of escape. It becomes a necessary, if reluctant, action meant to buy time for a strategic withdrawal. Furthermore, it seems that there has to be some unknown reality behind any bluff or threat of defensive aggression. That is, the “bluff” of a threatened human must be believable enough to cause the threat to think twice before pursuing any further action.²²

The final defensive behavior(s) fall under the rubric of appeasement. Marks delineated two fairly distinct appeasement behaviors in this category, deflection and submission. Deflection is an attempt to save what is vital by sacrificing another part of ourselves. For humans this can range from deflecting blows in a fight to the arms and legs and away from vital organs; it can take the shape of standing between a threat and a child; it might even mean deflecting topics that cut to the core of the ego or making a joke about ourselves in order to deflect critics (1987, p. 78). On the other hand, submission takes the shape of pre-empting a threatening situation by assuming a submissive role with other humans. Rather than standing tall, submissive humans generally stand small reducing the need for the threat to act.

To summarize this largely mechanical view of the emotion of fear, the thalamus receives sensory information; it is fed to the amygdala which sorts it for relevance, and when a threat is recognized the activation of a variety of systems occurs. Our pupils dilate, allowing us to take in more of our environments; the blood drains from our face, hands and feet and into our muscles; our brain focuses our senses on the threat for evaluation and reaction; our muscles tense and non-vital systems are shut down in order to conserve energy. These physiological changes prepare us to react with a specific set of behaviors adapted for use in threatening situations. These behaviors are mimicked by a wide variety of species and serve the purpose of enabling them to survive an impending threat. Due to the distinct neural structures, the patterned physiological responses and the similar behavioral strategies, we can say that the emotion of fear, as physiologically and behaviorally constructed, is largely conserved across human and other populations. However, human beings are far from mere mechanical entities. While our brains and behaviors reveal a great deal of similarity in how we respond to threats, the threats themselves are subjective and unpredictable. Before turning to that discussion in Chapter Four, I want to develop a hypothesis about the evolutionary development of the emotion of fear. Evolutionary disciplines add a layer of credibility to the notion that the emotion of fear is inescapable. Furthermore, by examining evolution and the emotion of fear I am able to develop two categories concerning the purpose of fear.

Evolution and the Emotion of Fear.

The relationship between evolution, the emotion of fear and defensive behaviors is vital to understanding its purpose. Without the emotion of fear and its resulting

behaviors, there is little likelihood that our ancestors would have survived the threats our world presents. While there is ample debate about the continuity of threats over time (whether culturally or genetically), specific physiological and behavioral responses show remarkable consistency throughout the millennia. These responses enabled us to assess and react to a variety of novel circumstances, including the threats to our individual existence. In order to understand the evolution of the emotion of fear in human beings I want to make three arguments. First, I begin by looking at the pervasive physiology of fear in non-human animals. From there, I turn to examine what makes the emotion of fear unique in human beings. Finally, I propose a way of thinking about the emotion of fear as an adaptive tool for surviving and coping with a sometimes hostile world.

No evolutionary exposition of the emotion of fear can begin with humans or even hominids for that matter. The physiology and defensive behaviors we associate with the emotion of fear are far older than the Pleistocene period and the development of the human brain. The origins of the physiological and behavioral characteristics of fear most likely began the moment an animal adapted and escaped the clutches of a predator. Prey that can avoid a predator is at a distinct advantage from other prey. Likewise, predators that have adapted new strategies to capture prey are at a distinct advantage over other similar predators. Marks (1987) noted that

Defensive responses arose as adaptations against threats from enemies and from other harsh realities in the environment. Throughout evolution there has been an arms race between the defensive adaptations of prey and attempts by predators to overcome them. (p. 14)

Before recorded history we imagine that there has been an intricate series of physiological adaptations that allowed some prey to develop particular defensive

behaviors. These behaviors enabled them to survive at a greater rate than others who did not develop these defensive capacities. As brains developed alongside behaviors, animals whose neural pathways were molded to react to predators and harsh environmental realities would have an advantage over those who did not develop these automatic response systems. The animals that survived lived to procreate and pass along inheritable defense systems. As the arms race continued and animals adapted under selective pressures, time and opportunity may have molded the structure and function of the amygdala. The amazing thing about the amygdala is its conservation of function across a wide variety of species. Concerning the amygdala, LeDoux stated that it:

seems to do the same thing – take care of fear responses – in all species that have an amygdala... The function seems to have been established eons ago, probably at least since dinosaurs ruled the earth, and to have been maintained through diverse branches of evolutionary development. (1996, p. 174)

It seems that long before humans emerged as a distinct species of hominid the physiological and behavioral components of fear had been selected *for*. In all of the adaptations since the emergence of the amygdala it has continued to provide a similar role related to the emotion of fear. While our focus is on the human manifestation of the emotion of fear, I cannot help but be amazed at how little human development has changed its inherent functioning for survival. While we share this basic similarity with other non-human species, there are a number of unique conditions which affect human beings. From research presented earlier in this chapter, the human amygdala seems to do more than just respond to threats. This, coupled with a number of other unique human features, helps provide a richer understanding of our reactions to the environment utilizing evolutionary appropriate responses.

Our similarity to other species provides one avenue which deepens the history of fear. However, evolutionary discussions about human beings should also reflect the idea that humans are quite different from non-humans. Anthropologists Boyd and Silk (2003) argued that “Evolutionary reasoning suggests that humans should be better at learning some kinds of tasks, making some kinds of decisions, and solving some kinds of problems than others” (p. 497). The complexity of the human brain is unmatched by any other species we have studied, despite our similar neurophysiological structures. The greatest difference between human and non-human species is the complex ways in which human brains interact with environmental cues in order to respond to certain stimuli. The reasons why we “should be better” at some tasks, decisions and problem-solving is that our brain has evolved to deal creatively with novel situations, to remember them and learn from them.

Basically, the human brain has “more cortical neurons than other mammals, although only marginally more than whales and elephants” (Roth & Dicke, 2005, p. 250). This sounds even more impressive when you factor in the physical size of these creatures relative to the size of a human being. According to Schoenemann (2006), “The human cerebellum is 2.9 times as large as expected for a primate of our body size” and “Modern human brains are 3.1 times larger than predicted on the basis of primate brain/body-size allometric scaling” (p. 384). In terms of size, which also shows some measure of intelligence, our brains have more neurons packed in to an organ that is three times larger than it should be for a body our size. As researchers Sherwood, Subiaul, and Zawidzki noted, “There appears to be a link between our intelligence and our expanded brain,

which increased in size by roughly threefold since the last common ancestor” (2008, p. 427). These authors described the difficulty in fully understanding human cognition as the tension between “flexibility and efficiency” (p. 447). To understand this phenomenon in conjunction with our study of fear, one example is the dual pathways between the thalamus and the amygdala. The thalamo-amygdala pathway is the efficient pathway. This is the pathway activated when the first sense of a possible threat reaches the visual field. Greater flexibility is seen in the thalamo-cortico-amygdala pathway which provides interpretive clues related to a threat. It is also the pathway where memories and cultural interpretations affect our reactions. Thus, in order to understand the evolution of the emotion of fear in human beings, efficiency and flexibility provide important clues about our unique utilization of fear in different contexts. We can also reframe the concepts of efficiency and flexibility to reflect sources of input into our interpretations. This provides an entrée into the dual inheritance theory of evolution.

Dual inheritance theory takes both cultural and genetic evolution seriously. The goal of this theory is to describe how some complex human skills have evolved without reducing them to a genetic root. I understand the categories of flexibility and efficiency to fit nicely with the idea that both “hardware” and “software” is passed down in human evolutionary history. According to philosopher Linquist:

The key idea is that complex psychological traits are transmitted from parent to offspring via two parallel channels. The computational ‘hardware’ required for social learning is transmitted genetically and the psychological ‘software’ that supports a given technology or skill is transmitted culturally. (2007, p. 849)

Dual inheritance theory adds a significant layer of thought to the evolution of human psychological capacities. It creates a multifaceted approach to evolution which allows

genetic and cultural material to influence human behavior. Linquist's goal in engaging evolutionary theory is to connect it with human emotional behaviors. He seeks to describe how human emotions become more complex over time without completely disregarding the role that evolution played in giving humans the capacity to experience the emotions in the first place.

As an example Linquist stated that "guilt appears to follow a multistage developmental process that starts out with an 'innate' sensitivity to the distress of others and which becomes increasingly cognitively elaborated as the child matures" (2007, p. 852). Children genetically inherit a disposition towards distress before they can cognitively reflect and interpret a situation and its meaning. As children develop, parents operate as the initial primary cultural institution, reacting to particular behaviors which teach children the meanings of the distress they innately pick up. When children are able to reflect on the emotion themselves they come to experience the innate distress and add layers of cultural meaning that they have picked up along the way. Linquist seemed to think there was a link between biological and cultural developments of guilty feelings, which "appears to begin even before children acquire an explicit sense of agency or can draw a conscious link between their actions and their future feelings" (2007, p. 853). Dual inheritance theory provides a theoretical orientation that reflects the influences of nature and nurture on our lives. I now want to examine how this theory helps us better understand fear.

The emotion of fear is hardwired to respond to threats utilizing a variety of physiological functions and behavioral reactions/strategies. These threats develop

through ontogenetic conditioning rather than phylogenetic predispositions.²³ Utilizing dual inheritance theory I want to bring together the hardware and software that inform the emotion of fear for human beings. On the hardware side, the structure and connections of the amygdala govern many of the physiological reactions to fear and engages our defensive behaviors. On the software side, I contend that threats are conditioned and should be treated as locally and socially conditioned phenomenon. To make full use of dual inheritance theory it is important to connect the hardware and the software meaningfully. In order to make this connection I want to develop a hypothesis as to how the hardware-oriented emotion of fear develops in newborns and infants. From these early developments we can begin to see software-related connections made in young children which continue into adulthood.

Evolution, as I understand it, is about the propagation of efficient and effective means of interacting with the world. Evolution is about survival and, for most species, procreation. While this is a fairly reductionistic view of human evolution, and one that I will seek to nuance later, it nonetheless guides the manner in which evolutionary processes are interpreted. A dual inheritance theory seeks to describe these efficient means as both a part of our genetic make-up and our cultural milieu. Evolution takes place in both our hardware and software to root out inefficiencies and prevent their transmission to the next generation. There are certain actions performed by newborns and infants which have been theorized as survival mechanisms. These mechanisms help me understand the emotion of fear as having its genesis in the complex interaction between our hardware and software.

In a lecture reviewing the literature on fear recognition and social cognition, Skuse (2007) noted that “Our ability to meet and to follow another’s gaze is present during early infancy and is associated with a growing appreciation of salient events in a socially structured world” (p. 52). We live in an interdependent world where our survival is not just left up to an individual. Certainly there is much we can do for ourselves; yet, at the same time, we require social contact in order to survive. A human infant or newborn, left to their own devices, would have some difficulty acquiring the necessities for life. In order to survive, an infant or newborn needs to establish social contact with a caregiver who can provide for their basic needs. Meeting the gaze of another human being is one way of connecting socially and attempting to find a way to have certain survival needs met. Skuse continued by stating that “The main function of egocentric gaze relates primarily to the viewpoint of the perceiver and onlooker, rather than to the spatial relations of the extrinsic world. Its goal is to engage the viewer and to control interaction” (2007, p. 52). Whether the need is social or physical or otherwise, infants and newborns engage in facial gymnastics with caregivers in order to develop rapport and have these specific needs met. Pontius takes this a step further when she suggested that “In relation to human babies, who, at a very early age, have the ability to ‘detect and to orient to faces,’ ... [which] suggested in part a prewired neural mechanism” (2005, p. 368). It is hard to tell just what percentage of a newborn’s attention to faces is part of their genetic makeup. We have no real ways of testing or even asking an infant why they are attentive to faces. However, the theory that part of the reason for this need to connect being related to survival would certainly stand up to most scrutiny. The ability to control a caregiver’s

gaze and attention would almost certainly provide a survival benefit in evolutionary thought. It is a logical inference that newborns that meet the gaze of and interact socially with caregivers would have an evolutionary advantage. These gaze meeting newborns and infants receive information about a variety of emotional states as they meet the gaze of a caregiver. I surmise that evidence of this transmission of emotional data would be found in the activation of a newborn or infant's amygdala. To support this claim I want to return to Skuse's review of the literature.

We already know that the amygdala is active when the emotion of fear is experienced. In conjunction with this understanding of the amygdala and the emotion of fear Skuse pointed out that "recent evidence suggests that the amygdala responds specifically to eye contact in adults, and that it is maximally activated by exaggerated wide-open eyes, such as are associated with a fearful expression" (2007, p. 51). What I understand from this statement is that a connection is made between hardware and software which communicates specific emotional capacities. Basically, our affinity for faces in general and eyes in particular activate specific components of the brain genetically programmed to deal with facial recognition. Additionally, by paying attention to faces and eyes an infant begins to receive cultural/familial/social data concerning a variety of emotional expressions.

These early points of contact are teaching infants about specific emotions and their environmental cues. Skuse's reliance on the role that allocentric gaze (the ability to follow the gaze of another person) plays in the life of infants and toddlers is evidence of a software connection being made between facial recognition and subsequent object

detection. Skuse remarked that the development of allocentric gaze “normally occurs during the first few years of postnatal life, and we become increasingly accurate at determining where someone else is looking with experience” (2007, p. 52).

The argument for utilizing dual inheritance theory to understand the relationship between the emotion of fear and evolution is fairly simple. First, the ability to meet the gaze of another conceivably provides an evolutionary advantage for a newborn or infant. Meeting the gaze of another is a social act, but it also helps the newborn or infant communicate and connect with caregivers. A large part of this connection through gaze is centered on eye contact which activates the amygdala; wide-open ocular expressions, associated with fear and surprise, activate the amygdala. As infants develop, interactions become more complex, and infants follow the gaze of others and correlate emotive responses with particular objects. These objects can sometimes include the correlation of a fear response with a particular threat.

The emotion of fear, seen through an evolutionary lens, is directly related to our ability to survive threats. The behaviors and physiological reactions provide us with the ability to cope with threats and take appropriate action related to our survival. We are born with the hardware to experience fear, as well as pre-programmed evolutionary skills which help us apply this emotion to our environment. Even before we can enact the behaviors associated with fear, there is evidence that we are attuned to recognize fearful gazes. Skuse pointed to research which found that “Infants are selectively interested in faces that show fear, even within the first year of life” (2007, p. 54). Selective attentiveness to particular expressions reveals a burgeoning complexity related to the

ability to recognize and refer to the social world for clues about threats. Our ability to survive in the world depends on the increasingly complex ways in which we can harness the emotion of fear in order to negotiate these threats. The programming of these survival instincts has its genesis in early social interactions. These interactions prime the activation of the amygdala, focus our attention on particular emotional cues and ultimately direct our gaze towards threatening objects.

As we develop, two forms of learning impact the recognition of threats: experiential learning and social learning. Experiential learning is defined as direct self to stimuli interaction. We learn about a threat by coming in contact with it and surviving. Social learning encompasses all of the other ways in which we learn about a threat. This could be through direct or indirect observation of another person's fear; or we could learn about a threat through cultural storytellers like the news, family members, friends or the internet. In both cases a form of conditioning takes place whereby we come to associate a stimulus as a threat and thereby induce a particular set of behavioral responses.

Right now, it is enough to note that almost all neuropsychological research related to the emotion of fear involves some kind of Pavlovian conditioning. This involves pairing an adverse stimulus with a neutral stimulus in order to condition the subject to fear the neutral stimulus. After enough pairings, the subject comes to see the neutral stimulus as a threat. It would be as if you saw your favorite dessert sitting on the counter. However, every time you reach out and touch the plate you receive an uncomfortable shock. After reaching out several times and getting shocked, you begin to associate the dessert with the shock and thus quit trying to grab it. What happens is the amygdala

encodes the memory of that dessert as a threat and categorizes it as something to fear. The next time the dessert is sitting out on the counter, you will recall that memory and your body will begin to process the interaction as threatening and react accordingly. Through your experience, you have developed a new fear of your favorite dessert. While we all may react to this kind of conditioning similarly, we do not all fear the same dessert.

On the social learning side, research from Olssen and Phelps (2007) revealed that fear can be learned through either watching someone else react to a threat or by merely telling someone they should feel threatened by an object. According to the authors, the “ability to detect and respond appropriately to signs of fear and pain in a conspecific probably has conferred a significant selective advantage during evolution” (p. 1096). Basically, it is to our advantage that we can recognize fear and/or pain in another human being. Learning vicariously through the experience of others provides an additional advantage when trying to navigate world that includes threats.

Moreover, our capacity for language helps transmit emotional feelings. As such, we can tell one another about the dangers a threat poses through the stories we tell. Olssen and Phelps remarked that, “Language forces the receiver to rely on similar past experiences and internally generated imagery to establish an emotional memory” (p. 1099). The authors found significant similarities between reactions to experientially and socially learned fears. As culture evolves so do the ways in which we can transmit the possibility of threats. Whereas early in our history this might happen around a campfire

or in small groups, today our social learning takes place on a global scale through a variety of media outlets.

What I hope to have shown in this discourse is an alternative formulation for the development of fear in our evolutionary history. Our genetic topographies reveal embodied structures which enable us to react to and cope with threats in the environment. Evolutionary hardware, including the amygdala and a “pre-programmed” desire to connect with the social world, provides the initial introduction of a new human being to the emotion of fear. Evolutionary software uploaded through interactions with caregivers direct our gaze and defines particular objects as threats; our unique software develops during the post-natal period and activates the hardware in place to deal with a threat. My contention is that this explanation provides a more plausible analysis of the emotion of fear than the one offered by the evolved fear module. In the end, the emotion of fear serves an evolutionarily advantageous purpose for human beings. That purpose is to survive and cope with an unpredictable world. These two thematic purposes arise out of a basic understanding of the mechanics of fear. However, as complex beings, humans make additional connections to fear around its meaning.

The most basic understanding of our evolutionary purpose is that we are built to survive and procreate. For human beings, I think this can be subtly twisted to state that we act and react to the world in a manner that helps us survive, cope and thrive. Given the cognitive complexity that separates us from our closest genetic cousins, I think a basic understanding of our evolutionary purpose is helpful; yet, we also deserve a more nuanced understanding of our purpose. Survival and coping with a threat are easy enough

to interpret as part of the meaning and purpose of the emotion of fear. When we think of procreation I want to propose that we understand it through the lens of thriving. Thus, the instinct to create progeny in humans is more akin to a nuanced human instinct to create, recreate and procreate. We are nothing if not imaginative creatures. To say that we have evolved to be “for creation” reveals a purpose centering on the ways we choose to thrive in the world.

As we look to defining the meaning of fear for contemporary human beings we will return to this idea of surviving and thriving again. However, we should not be so quick as to forget how the emotion of fear helps us cope with a threat. Defensive behaviors provide the necessary means by which we cope with a threat lives. They provide a meaningful action with regard to a threat which enables us to relate to it appropriately. When we put these three meanings together, we find that the emotion of fear reveals a human need to survive, cope and thrive in a sometimes unpredictable world. In this same vein of interpretation, human beings might be well-served by beginning to look not only at the threat they wish to escape, but also the reasons which make their escape necessary. That is, when threatened and afraid, we may not always be running away from something. We may also have something in mind that we feel is worthy of running towards.

Chapter Four: The Experiential and Social Underpinnings of our Fears

In this fourth chapter I want to turn from examining the physiological understanding of fear to the ways in which we construct our unique fears. Neuropsychologists Johnson and LeDoux (2004) wrote that there are two ways to conceptualize fear, “subjective states (the feeling of fear) and bodily responses (behavioral, autonomic, and endocrine changes) elicited by threatening stimuli” (p. 228). Neurophysiology, dual inheritance evolutionary theory and behavioral reactions all comprise ways to examine the bodily responses to the emotion of fear. Each discipline points to fear as a necessary tool for survival. This chapter examines fear as a subjective state, constructed through a variety of interactions with our social environments.

Psychologists Jarymowicz and Bar-Tal (2006) characterize the concept of fear by separating it into primary affective and social qualities.

On the level of primary affect, fear is related to homeostasis. On the level of social emotions... fear is a component of more complex reactions and feelings, such as panic, dread, anxiety, despair, caution, submission, guilt, shame, prudery, or cowardliness. (p. 371)

At the physiological level, fear balances the recognition of threats in the environment with our need for survival. At a secondary level, the social component to fear encompasses the depth and breadth of subjective reactions to the emotion of fear. While we all have the capacity to experience the physiological emotion of fear, the feeling of fear will differ from person to person. Thus, while you and I might jump at the sight of a

spider crawling across the floor, one of us might jump higher or farther away depending on our interpretation of that spider as a threat. The same threat triggers reactions that vary in intensity based upon the meanings and interpretations that we have internalized related to that threat.

This chapter explores subjective components of fear. For me, to understand the meaning of subjectivity is to understand how we remember experiences (memory), what we believe as a result (beliefs) of experience and what we imagine happening in future interactions or the subsequent moments of a present interaction (imagination). These three components form my understanding of subjectivity. Two additional sources impact our subjectivity, emotions and society. Our memories, beliefs and imaginings occur in a social milieu and they are impacted by emotional content. We learn what to fear through our interactions with the world, and through the world's interactions with us. Subjectivity is affected by individual and social phenomena. Moreover, our emotional response impacts our memories, which has further implications for our beliefs and imagination.

Psychology provides a framework through which our subjectivity can be understood. Most studies of the psyche intend to provide useful theoretical and clinical knowledge. I utilize the postmodern approach offered by narrative theorists as the best avenue for a theory of the psyche. Utilizing narrative theory and practices helps weave a tapestry that can incorporate neuropsychological theories, philosophical positions and good clinical practices. Through the telling of stories our memories are activated, our beliefs about an experience are revealed and we engage our imaginations. Narratives reveal what we have learned, how we remember our lives, what we believe about

ourselves and the world, and what comes next. They are the means by which our perspective on an experience comes to life. The social interaction based around narratives is a two-way street; we both give knowledge, beliefs and dreams and receive these same messages from others. Much like the human brain, our stories are dynamic and flexible. We never share the same story twice; we are always interpreting and re-interpreting the world and our roles within it.

This chapter begins with the roots of subjectivity. Memories, beliefs and our imaginations are the lenses which inform the content and structure of our stories. I intentionally develop these three categories using data from neuropsychology as well as theories of emotion. My discussion of subjectivity continues by examining the social qualities of interpretation. The lenses of constructivism and social constructionism explore how we come to interpret the world around us, including our unique fears. Finally, this chapter ends by exploring how the self is constructed utilizing narrative philosophy. This view of our constructed identities is used to introduce narrative therapeutic theory and practice.

Subjectivity: Memory, Beliefs, and Imagination

When we interpret an experience we do much more than take in the facts of our surroundings. When we interpret, we remember. Two types of memories flood our minds when we are confronted with an experience in the present. Sometimes, we are able to search for similar experiences in order to gauge the necessity for a specific reaction. Other times, memories are recalled without conscious effort, almost forcing themselves upon a situation. When we interpret, we impose beliefs. The meaning we ascribe to a

memory or a present experience through a memory adds to the interpretive mix of the moment. When we interpret, we imagine. Our imagination works on two levels. If we believe an experience to be novel our imagination works to provide possibilities for what might happen. If an experience bears a resemblance to previous experiences our imagination provides a picture of what it believes is going to happen. Neuroscientist Berthoz (2006) pointed to the fact that

Making a decision requires associating events, sensations, memories, and so on. This work of association is carried out in part in the amygdala. But making a decision also requires deliberating over it, changing one's point of view, mentally altering the relations between associated elements, and simulating different possible realities. So it has to be somewhat flexible. (p. 203)

Berthoz is describing is the building blocks of interpretation. Memories, beliefs and imagination engage an experience at multiple levels in order to inform our reaction to that experience. As we move from fear to hope, the notion of flexible interpretive frames is important. A person who is believed to be dynamic, operating out of multiple identities, carries the building blocks through which change and re-interpretation of experience can occur.

While these three categories are relatively straightforward, we should remember that they operate in the context of emotional, behavioral, social and reasoned responses to a current experience. Thus, while we remember, believe and imagine, we are also feeling, acting and reasoning. When we interpret, all of these things happen together to read and respond to our experiences. Furthermore, each category of subjectivity is impacted by our emotional state. We already know that fear impacts our memories, making them stronger, longer lasting and easier to recall. As this examination of memory, beliefs and

imagination continues, we will also discover how emotions impact our beliefs and imagination as well.

Memory

Have you ever had a past experience intrude on the present without your conscious consent? Have you ever had the lyrics of a song repeat over and over again until you thought it would drive you mad? Have you ever remembered a story yet in sharing it find out that others who experienced the same event remember things differently? Memory is at same time a complex and simple phenomenon. If you look at the above questions, a number of themes emerge surrounding the concept of memory. First, memory has to do with past experiences, we remember something. Second, memory requires an act, that is “remembering” must occur in order for the memory to be realized. Third, memories can be intrusive. That is, sometimes our remembering occurs outside our conscious control. Moreover, the facts of memories can be elusive, subject to interpretative and emotional frames that have been added to an experience.

The term memory is a multifaceted concept. At first glance memory might refer to a stored event or knowledge. Yet, we also use the term memory to describe the retrieval process, such as when we say that our memory fails us. Looking deep into the brain we might think of memory as the neurophysiological structures that aid us in encoding and remembering stored knowledge. Developing a singular concept of memory can be difficult. While neurophysiological structures are important, I think a concept of memory requires looking more broadly at its functional components. Our primary task is to understand memory as a key element to our interpretive process. To do this I will

provide: (1) a concept of memory, (2) an understanding of voluntary and involuntary memory, and (3) a sense of the impact emotion has on our memory.

Given the variety of disciplines which attempt to utilize the concept of memory, a singular definition is difficult to ascertain. Cutting across these disciplinary contexts is not easy. Dudai, Roediger, III and Tulving noted that while “There does exist some commonality in the languages spoken by memory science’s parental disciplines already... However, this accord often fails to extend to the level where it could matter most, the level of concepts” (2007, p. 1). As it stands, there is some agreement on the basic language of memory; however, the definitions used to describe these terms differs from discipline to discipline. Agreement on basic understandings of concepts is vital to cross disciplinary conversation. In a recent attempt to expose memory to conceptual level thinking psychologist Schacter (2007) worked to “seek what is common to the concept of memory across the various forms, i.e. to try and delineate the core of memory itself” (p. 23). Schacter’s method examined four of the six definitions of memory delineated in an article by Tulving, a psychologist who has been studying memory for decades. The result of Schacter’s analysis led him to confirm that memory is “the neurocognitive capacity to encode, store and retrieve information” (2007, p. 26). This basic concept incorporates much of the overall process and function of memory. It provides an emphasis on the role of the brain in memory processes; it understands memory as encompassing the functions of encoding and retrieval; and it includes the storage of knowledge as a function of memory. One of the key functions of any concept of memory deals with retrieval of stored knowledge.

The terms voluntary and involuntary memory refer to two processes of retrieval which occur daily. Mace (2007) proposed that voluntary memory refers to “instances when memories come to mind because they are either willed, intended, thought about, searched for, and so forth... In short, voluntary memory appears to be our ability to call up our personal past on demand” (p. 1). Writing this chapter is an exercise in voluntary memory. I am intentionally willing stored knowledge into a linguistic format appropriate for the context of this chapter. However, there are times when an intrusive association process interrupts my writing. This intrusion is one instance of our involuntary memory. Mace understands involuntary memory as “instances in which memories come to mind spontaneously, unintentionally, automatically, without effort, and so forth” (p. 2). He further elaborates on involuntary memory by delineating three instances where involuntary memories invade our lives: precious fragments, by-products of other memories, and not so precious fragments.

Precious fragments refer to a familiar form of involuntary memory. These memories are the associations brought to the forefront of our awareness through common everyday experiences and mental functioning. The feature most associated with these memories is the surprising nature of their content related to the experience being perceived. A second form of involuntary memory discussed by Mace is involuntary memory as by-products of other memories. This form of involuntary memory refers to the process whereby a memory is retrieved which sometimes “will trigger another related memory, which in turn might trigger another” (2007, p. 3). It is as if the first willed memory produces a cascade of subsequent unbidden memories. Mace alludes to this type

of involuntary memory as “resulting from deliberate attempts to construct the past” (p. 3). The final type of involuntary memory named by Mace is the not so precious fragment. These generally stem from traumatic experiences and are considered to be repetitive but rare occurrences in everyday life. However, these fragments are so intrusive that they are part of the diagnostic criteria for post-traumatic stress disorder, and their troubling nature “caused it to be of interest to clinicians and clinical researchers, dating back as far as Freud” (Mace, 2007, p. 4).

Mace reports that, on average, humans have 3 to 5 involuntary memories per day (p. 5). These memories can be primed “by cognitive activities which involve recalling the past” (2007, p. 6). This assertion provides an interesting clinical note. Namely, that rumination about the past may cause involuntary memories to surface. This could be a dual-edged sword. On the one hand, priming the mental pump helps create a wide variety of clinically important associations that might otherwise be unknown. On the other hand, rumination about past trauma may provide a situation where involuntary memories would become more intrusive, hindering the ability of a person to interact meaningfully. I believe the involuntary and intrusive recall of traumatic memories can be closely associated with an intense sense of fear related to an experience or object.

To this point memory has been stated to be a neurocognitive process related to how we encode, store and retrieve knowledge. Furthermore, I have divided memory retrieval processes into voluntary and involuntary forms of memory. Both of these forms of memory are important for our understanding of subjectivity due to the ways in which

they shape our interpretations of a present experience. However, I associate involuntary memories with the emotion and feeling of fear.

First, involuntary memories have associations which surprise us in the present. As we have seen, fear is an emotion that is temporally aligned with the present due to the necessity of a threat for its arousal. Second, involuntary memories can be intrusive and in the case of a relived trauma or threat, frightening. Mace points out that traumatic involuntary memories often encompass the “worst moment of a traumatic experience. As such, then, traumatic involuntary memories tend to cause the individual stress, whereas this is generally not the case for ordinary involuntary memories” (2007, p. 9). Content alone does not produce stress; therefore something else must be produced alongside these traumatic involuntary memories. I contend that these memories produce emotional reactions and many times this reaction is fear. From Chapter Three, we know that the physiological reaction to the emotion of fear produces a variety of tensions throughout the body which can be construed as stress reactions. Furthermore, it seems as though these strong emotional reactions affect our memories as well.

From a neurophysiological perspective, the amygdala plays a role in stamping memories with emotional content. In Chapter Three I mentioned that emotional memories tend to be more vivid, last longer and are easier to recall. It is important to note that the correlation between emotions and memories works for both positive and negative emotions. That is, our memories are easier to recall, last longer and are more vivid for happy occasions as well as fearful ones. Psychologist Reisberg stated that “The study of emotional memories also is crucial if we are going to understand autobiographical

memory in general... the events that make us who we are, usually are emotional in one fashion or another” (2006, p. 15). Autobiographical memory refers to the memories we use to describe our personal experiences. These are the memories that remind us of who we are based on how we interact with the life that unfolds around us. It is not a stretch to say that the most vivid, longest lasting and easiest to recall memories are also the memories that have a greater impact on how we define our sense of self.

To this end, psychologists Buchanan and Adolphs (2004) described four ways that emotions influence memory. The authors stated that:

We can think of the ways in which emotion influences memory as changes in memory for (1) the emotion-inducing sensory properties of stimuli themselves..., (2) the intrinsically neutral sensory properties of stimuli associated with a related emotional state..., (3) the emotional state itself in the perceiver..., or (4) higher-order information about the emotion and the stimuli... None of these is mutually exclusive, and there is evidence to suggest that the amygdala may contribute to all of them. (pp. 65-66)

All four of these relationships hinge on associations and how we remember an experience and its associated emotion. The first relationship reflects the ways in which memories change because of the direct emotional impact of a stimulus. That is, the stimulus itself holds the greatest emotional valence upon recall. The content of the memory, the experience itself, is remembered differently once emotional content is sensed. Think about it as the difference between writing a liturgy for a funeral and sitting through the funeral of a loved one. The funeral itself comes to mean something vastly different when the emotional layer of losing a loved one is added to the memory. How we remember funerals from that point forward changes. Thus, the way we remember a stimulus is transformed by the emotional content, and the emotional content transforms the meaning of the stimulus as well. The second relationship pairs something thought to be neutral

with an emotionally significant event. Going back to the funeral analogy, we might remember that a particular hymn was sung during the service. The hymn is essentially a neutral component of the service. However, because of the emotional situation, a relationship forms between the sadness felt at losing a loved one and the hymn. Remembering the hymn then brings back the sadness felt at the time. The third way emotion affects memory is through the ways in which we remember feeling an emotion. In this relationship, we merely remember that at some point we were sad or frightened or happy, etc. There is less of a clear stimulus for the emotion and the conditions of the emotion itself are the memory. The final relationship deals more with the cognitive awareness of an emotion or of a particular stimulus which produced an emotion. Returning to our funeral analogy, we might think of a pastor who has been through the funeral of a loved one, but also continues to perform funerals for others' loved ones. The pastor might remember her own emotional experience and that a funeral can produce sadness for those involved. This can be helpful reframing of a memory and its emotional content allowing the pastor to be more available to those who are experiencing a similar circumstance in the present moment.

These four relationships between memory and emotion provide a basic understanding of the ways in which emotion impacts and changes our memories. From a physiological perspective, fear is a fairly homogenous set of embodied reactions and behaviors related to the sense of threat we correlate with a particular object. From a subjective point of view, emotional memories provide one avenue through which the

interpretation of particular fears develops. Understanding memory requires three components: encoding, retrieval and storage.

During the encoding process, I noted that the emotion of fear narrows our field of vision so that we can focus on a threat. This ensures that our memories store specific knowledge related to the central themes of a fearful experience. We become so focused that peripheral stimuli fade into the background. Our memories of an event become vivid for the threatening object and fuzzy for any other details. Our focused attention on central details or themes changes what we might otherwise remember about a similar experience without a threat involved (See Reisberg, 2006). Thus the emotion of fear adds an initial layer of subjectivity which focuses a particular memory on a threat within the context of an experience.

Interpretation is most noticeable during the retrieval process. A layer of subjectivity is added whenever a memory is recalled to inform us about a current situation. In any given moment an association can be drawn between our current situation and a past situation. This is the point that Buchanan and Adolphs (2004) make by positing the different relationships between emotion and memory. That is not to say that there are no novel situations; however, every novel situation is interpreted through remembered themes or associations. Involuntary memories are one way in which these associations develop in novel situations. These memories come unbidden and place demands upon our attention. Their retrieval shapes our interpretation of the current event, especially when these memories fall into the “not so precious fragment” category. When it comes to fearful memories, I have purported that they are especially vivid in narrow

ways. During the retrieval process fearful memories can provide a vivid set of associations which can affect our behavioral and physiological responses.

My interpretation of a spider's sudden presence is shaped by my previous experiences with spiders in a variety of locations. While there is great novelty in situations (location, actors, experience, novel threat specifics), my reactions are similar to other reactions related to my memory of spiders. I attribute my fear reactions to the retrieval of involuntary memories which intrude into the present moments.

Finally, the stored knowledge I possess is unique to my person. While the retrieval process itself may be similar in human brains, what gets retrieved in any given circumstance is unique. Memory forms the grounding knowledge of our subjectivity; however, there is more to our interpretive frames than just stored knowledge and encoding and retrieval processes. My memory of spiders develops out of the culmination of all of my experiences and interpretations of the threat I believe spiders pose to my well-being. My memories have been shaped into beliefs about spiders that I utilize as additional lenses of interpretation.

Beliefs

In a perfect world memories record an experience exactly as it occurs. We live in a world that is far from perfect. Emotions affect our memories, changing their focus based on previous perceptions and interpretations. What we remember is, generally speaking, often far from what actually happened. Furthermore, when we retrieve and retell a stored narrative that narrative is rife with our beliefs related to what has happened. Thus, beliefs form another core part of how we subjectively interpret the world. In this

section, I explore the understanding of what the term belief means, ending by examining how emotions and beliefs affect our interpretive frames.

According to psychologists Frijda, Manstead and Bem (2000) “Beliefs can be defined as states that link a person or group or object or concept with one or more attributes, and this is held by the believer to be true” (p. 5). In the same edited volume, psychologists Fiedler and Bless (2000) stated that “Believing presupposes not having perfect knowledge but taking some risk and adding some internally generated inference in adopting an idea, goal or argument” (p. 144). Together these concepts of belief have more power than they do separately. Namely, that beliefs are mental states linking an attribute with an object; this interpretive link does not presume that knowledge concerning the relationship is perfect, requiring the interpreter to risk something in order to fully adopt a belief as having some truth.

I sense this definition tests well in the context of religious beliefs. As an example, most of my memories pertaining to religion were formed through experiences in Christian churches. In my memories, I have come to associate particular attributes with Christianity. My list of attributes is a series of mental constructs based on memories which have been thematically organized around stored knowledge and experiences. My memories include times of worship, mission, fellowship and study experiences. These experiences have been interpreted in light of one another with the result being an internally constructed framework of beliefs that I find necessary for the practice of authentic Christianity. As constructs they do not provide a perfect description of Christianity. However, they provide a personal truth that leads me to take particular

interpretive risks when speaking about the things I believe. The first thing that most Christians might notice about these statements is their cognitive origins. Christianity, they might state, has much more to do with carefully developed sets of constructs that guide behavior. For the most part they would be right. Even the psychologists we have quoted in this brief exposition notice that there is a difference between belief and action²⁴.

Frijda, Manstead and Bem noted that

Although beliefs may guide our actions..., they are not sufficient to initiate action. No matter how rational your thoughts about helping the needy may be, you need an emotional impulse before you actually volunteer to help. Emotions are prime candidates for turning a thinking being into an actor. (2000, p. 3)

What we need to realize is that emotions also impact the beliefs that arise from an interpretive process. Though many might read my statements above and say that “faith” is the missing item, a closer reading might be that passion is what is missing from an understanding of beliefs as mental constructs. One source of passion is our emotions; they drive us to act on our beliefs.

Psychologists Frijda, Manstead and Bem argued that “emotions can awaken, intrude into, and shape beliefs, by creating them, by amplifying or altering them, and by making them resistant to change” (2000, p. 5). Emotions have a deep impact on what we believe. Through the impact of emotions our beliefs about the world and our experiences are practically irrevocably altered. Frijda, Manstead and Bem saw the impact of emotions on beliefs as varying quite a bit. Whatever the relationship between emotions and experience happens to be, the results seem to strengthen, embolden, create or even tear apart beliefs.

Psychologists Frijda and Mesquita (2000) proposed a more generalized version of the relationship between emotion and beliefs by stating that “Emotions influence beliefs in basically two ways. They may give rise to beliefs where none existed, or change existing beliefs; and they may enhance or decrease the strength with which a belief is held” (p. 45). Frijda and Mesquita thought that conversion experiences offered a window into how emotion shapes beliefs. They stated that, “The intertwining of belief and emotion is most evident in the conversion experience, in which an emotionally overwhelming experience vouches for the truth of acquired belief and constitutes it as a conviction” (2000, pp. 50-51). In this way, emotions not only give rise to a new set of beliefs but also change what we believe to be true about the world. Furthermore, a conversion experience, though often referenced in religious settings, could also be applied to experiences of fear. In the presence of a threat which gives rise to the emotion of fear, we become converts who construct beliefs about that object through the vivid memories we retain from our experiences with the threat.

Frijda and Mesquita also proposed that emotions might enhance or decrease a certain belief. They develop three clues relating emotions to strength of beliefs: concern relevance, emotional intensity and the intervention of virtual emotions (p. 61). In order for an emotion to impact the strength of a belief it must be relevant to a person’s “motives, major goals, personal sensitivities, attachments, and supra-personal goals” (Frijda & Mesquita, 2000, p. 61). For example, dogs bite people. Spiders bite people. I have overwhelmingly positive interactions with dogs and enjoy playing with them. The opposite is true for spiders. My fear of spiders provides emotional support for my beliefs

concerning their danger. Even though I know that dogs also bite people, I am more apt to feel joy upon seeing a dog than fear. The emotional content of my memories with dogs and spiders strengthen the beliefs I hold about the relative safety in interacting with each animal.

Emotional intensity is the second way emotions affect beliefs. Clore and Gasper (2000) proposed that “An increase in emotional intensity may further narrow attentional focus, making relevant events seem even more important, leading to still greater intensity, and so on in an ever-narrowing circle” (p. 11). With the emotion of fear, physiological reactions occur which induce narrow threat-focused behavior. This intense reaction would feed back onto the beliefs which give a threat its meaning. Depending on the situation, specific intense emotions related to threats could strengthen or weaken an already held belief. The emotional intensity of an experience can work to provide new interpretive material in which to re-evaluate and act upon modified beliefs appropriately.

Emotional anticipations are another way emotions affect the strength of our beliefs. The authors proposed that, “It probably is the anticipation of emotional situations and corresponding emotions that can give beliefs their enormous power when challenged” (p. 63). Challenges to the meanings we hold dear are often met with powerful reactions led by emotional responses. When we anticipate entering a situation which requires us to defend our beliefs, we respond with physiological changes to the body which is related to the rise of emotional output. By anticipating the emotions of a defensive position we are on guard so that we can protect our beliefs. This, in turn, strengthens our hold upon particular beliefs through their emotional connections.

Emotional beliefs play a significant role in the ways we interpret and interact with the world. When relevant, emotions can intrude into our deeply held beliefs, imposing new guidelines for interpreting the world in which we live. The sociological data from Chapter Two pointed to the ways the emotion of fear creates and/or transforms our beliefs about crime, terrorism and our neighbors. When an object or experience is interpreted in light of the emotion of fear, there is a distinct possibility that a strong and enduring belief will form. Furthermore, emotional beliefs centered on fear may intrude on other arenas of life when themes of the original experience overlap with new experiences. Fear-tinged beliefs, formed from the memories of experiences, inform the manners in which we can respond to novel situations. Thus, the final component of human subjectivity relates to the ways in which our imagination informs the possibilities of our lives.

Imagination

Psychiatrist Reading (2004) proposed that imagination

involves conjuring up stored visual and auditory images, and stringing them together into scenarios that can be played out in our *theater of the mind*... Fantasy and imagination allows us to experience life vicariously and experiment by trying things out in our mind's eye... We can only imagine the future in ways that are related to how we have experienced and understood the past, for we are unable to conceive of things that do not fit with our preconceived models of the world. (p. 68, *italics author's*)

There is a connection between memories, beliefs and imagination. To imagine is to utilize our creativity to construct novel ideas, concepts or stories from fragments of our memory and influenced by our beliefs about the world. Thus the greatest limitations of our imagination are twofold. The first limitation pertains to our knowledge about the

world. These limits could stem from the breadth of our educational practices and experiences, or even from the stories we have experienced throughout our lives. The second limitation of our imaginations relates to the creative capacities we use to put fragments together in novel ways. Imagination may begin with what we know or believe, but it also depends on the creative combination of this knowledge to construct new stories. Psychologist Reading concluded that “Ideas and images concocted out of the figments of imagination have... motivated people to cross oceans, build pyramids, and create civilizations” (2004, p. 69). Yet, while imagination can create new and meaningful worlds, it is not always related to positive constructive practices. As pastoral theologian Hogue (2003) stated “Imagination is not merely a source of pleasure. The creations of our minds can frighten as well as inspire and comfort us” (p. 15). Any memory fragment or belief is fair game for imaginative interpretation and reconstruction. Thus, there is nothing that limits negative experiences from being a part of this process as well.

I want to return to my fear of spiders as an example of the ways in which our imagination and emotions impact one another. When I was younger I found a large brown spider in the corner of a basement closet. I was alone in the house and the surprise from finding such a large threat got my adrenaline pumping. I forgot what I was looking for in the closet and immediately ran upstairs to try and find a method of removing the spider. What I found was a can of wasp and hornet spray. I returned to the closet and immediately began dousing the spider with the spray not knowing if it would work to kill the spider. The rest of the night I experienced the force of my imagination. I couldn't be sure that the wasp and hornet spray worked and I was too scared to return to the basement

to find out. Instead, I found myself visualizing the staircase and a mangled spider slowly crawling up the stairs to exact revenge on me. At various points in the evening I would peer over the back of the couch down the staircase to check and make sure that nothing was heading my way. I sat on the couch – hyper-vigilant, with my feet off the ground – afraid that this threat would return. Imagination provides us with a myriad of interpretive possibilities, some of these hopeful and some paralyzing. Social worker Smith (2007), while studying the impact of threats on helping professionals, reported that “Threats work by fuelling the fires of the imagination that threaten to burn down defences erected by workers” (p. 327). The person imagining a threat projects calamity and turmoil into the future freezing them from taking the appropriate kinds of action to relieve the distress.

Reading corroborated much of what I am saying by stating that “Our ability to predict the future is a two-edged sword... if what we see is dark and foreboding, we become weighed down with inaction and despair” (2004, p. 172). Negatively imagined futures impact depressed individuals who believe it holds no promise for them; fearful individuals may imagine the worst in everyone or every new experience and live life in a constantly hyper-vigilant state. Utilizing the thoughts of horror fiction writer Stephen King, Smith (2007) explained that fears are “fed by the imagination to the extent that they evolve into something worse than the reality” (p. 327). There are times when our imagination gets the best of us, making possible future realities much worse than the reality of any given moment. What becomes evident in imaging both positive and negative futures is that they are connected to our memories, beliefs and emotions in intimate ways.

I want to say a little more about the manner in which our imagination utilizes emotions and their behavioral reactions to our benefit and detriment. Reading (2004) proposed that

The advantage that imagination has over pure thought is that it can elicit associated emotional information that can be used in decision making. We can thus evaluate alternative scenarios in our mind by experiencing whether they elicit favorable or unfavorable emotional reactions. (p. 68)

Emotions are generally coupled with a variety of physiological sensations and behavioral cues alongside subjective feelings. This leads us to develop possible and/or probable future courses of action based on imagined reconstructions. As stated before, our imaginings are limited to the knowledge and nurtured creativity we possess (or that continues to develop). Thus, what is created through imagination is purely the result of our own memories, beliefs, emotions and creative constructions. These reconstructions are wholly our own creative interpretation from beginning to end, at least until it is proffered to a public audience.²⁵ Future courses of action depend on our ability to stomach the emotional possibilities they bring with them. If all we can imagine is the feeling of fear in an imagined experience, then chances are we will avoid that kind of experience or react negatively should the experience find us. Imagination plays an important role by directing the attention of the human mind in present and future moments based on the knowledge contained in the memories of our past. Imagination is the result of previous learning rearranged through a novel reconstructive process and providing a subjective interpretive frame for present and future experiences.

Summary

Memories, beliefs and imagination provide the basic building blocks for our interpretive lenses. Our acts in the world cannot be reduced to a mere physiological presence. We are human beings who interact with a dynamic world and change as a result of that interaction. These interactions involve a wide range of interpretive possibilities given the memories, beliefs and imagination of an individual. Furthermore, it is obvious that emotions play a deep role in memory recall, belief formation and imagined possibilities. Emotions can create, strengthen, diminish or change a set of interpretation or possibilities we have adopted.

When it comes to fear each one of these interpretive blocks plays a role in the process of developing and maintaining particular objects as threats. Our memory provides the knowledge of experienced threats, giving emotional weight to particular circumstances or objects. Through our emotional memories, we develop meanings concerning particular threats. These mental constructs provide for general attributions to a particular object. Our beliefs can intensify the meanings we associate with threatening objects. Finally, our imaginations provide for the possibility that we would project fearful reactions onto future interactions with a particular threat. Taken together, these three building blocks provide the impetus for the continued associate of fear with a particular threat. Furthermore, due to the interaction between memory, beliefs and imagination I surmise that there are times when feared threats are generalized or the emotion is projected onto non-feared objects with similar themes. This might mean that when a person who is afraid of guns hears a car backfire their imaginations, utilizing previous

knowledge about the sound a gun makes, imagines that the backfire is a gunshot and they react by diving under their desk. In this case, the imagination utilizes the best information it has from memory which then informs the beliefs about a particular sound and enables that person to react accordingly. While all of these processes are described as individually maintained, what is also evident from these sources is the role of experience in their activity. Subjectivity does not arise in a vacuum; it requires interaction with outside influences. For me, the best way to talk about external influences is through the lenses of constructivism and social constructionism.

Subjectivity: The Construction of Fears

Two types of learning influence the construction of fear in our lives. Experiential learning occurs when we directly experience a threat which elicits the emotion of fear. Second-hand learning happens when we are exposed to another's interpretation of an experience. Both of these types of learning require a person to interpret and incorporate an object as a threat into their meaning structure. Yet, sources for the initial interpretation are vastly different. In the first instance, the impetus for associating an object as a threat comes from an internal source of meaning. Through second-hand learning an interpretation of an object is "forced" upon another person eliciting a reaction of fear.

For example, someone present when the World Trade Center fell might easily become afraid of a number of objects – terrorists, tall buildings, big cities. Their fears would be related to their experience with one of these objects and the personally constructed meaning related to those moments living with the threat. On the other hand, threats arise differently for someone who witnessed the World Trade Center fall on

television. There is an additional layer of interpretation offered by the commentators of the event. While the same objects might be interpreted as threats, the means by which the fear is acquired is different. In the first instance, we are responsible for the interpretation of the object (though some might easily contend that the meanings we construct develop socially). In the second instance, another person's meanings accompany a situation, pre-interpreting an object before (or simultaneously as) we experience the object ourselves.

I relate these two forms of learning to the philosophical and psychological theories of constructivism (experiential learning) and social constructionism (second-hand learning). There are strict proponents of each of these theories, yet I find that this project will be better helped by utilizing both of them. Just as one theory of learning cannot fully explain how we learn to fear particular objects, one psychological/philosophical paradigm doesn't fully explain the way we construct reality. In short, I see constructivism as helping us understand the ways in which we personally encode meaning into our experiences. In addition, social constructionism allows us to see how relationships and culture impact the sources of knowledge we utilize in interpreting the world. Ultimately, I will develop what I call "constructionism" which endeavors to see *persons in context* as a theory of how we interact with the world and our experiences of it. The remainder of this section will elaborate my understanding of these two theories of construction, relating them to the two forms of learning proposed earlier. I will conclude by developing a synthesis of these theories in order to understand how we learn to fear particular threats.

Constructivism

Crotty (as cited in Patton, 2002) described constructivism as:

the epistemological considerations focusing exclusively on ‘the meaning-making activity of the individual mind’... Constructivism taken in this sense points out the unique experience of each of us. It suggests that each one’s way of making sense of the world is as valid and worthy of respect as any other. (p. 97)

Constructivism is a singular task whereby an individual constructs unique meanings related to their individual experiences. The theory of constructivism helps us understand the unique qualities related to the ways in which we interpret and incorporate experience into the narratives of our lives. Lester (2003) described constructivist narratives as reflecting “our unique interpretations of the world and [they] are not to be confused with the real world. In this sense, persons must be responsible for their thoughts, feelings, and actions in response to the world as they perceive it” (p. 92). I understand constructivism as describing the unique methods we utilize in order to derive meaning from novel experiences. These unique meanings are constructed from our own subset of memories, beliefs and imaginings. It is these meanings that enable us to construct what we believe to be reality; we are responsible for their content and the ways in which we act as a result of how we interpret the world.

Additionally, constructivism can help us see how two people who witness the same event come away with completely different interpretations and memories of what happened. Constructivism, in part, explains my reaction to spiders and how it is different from your reaction to spiders. It prioritizes the individual interpretive impact of an experience and the reality constructed in its aftermath. This enables us to consider a reality valid regardless of its grounding in the real world.

I find the connection between a direct experience and constructivism helpful. Both concepts center on the person as the initiator and locus of interpretation, experience and meaning-making. In first-hand learning the subject experiences an object/threat and reacts using a series of judgments. The subject is the sole interpreter of that event/threat, putting together the information they gather and formulating a response. The resulting reaction is unique to the subject due to the individual manner with which memories, beliefs and imagination are creatively intertwined to make sense of an event/threat.

A constructivist would look at our September 11th example and see that each person internalized the event and created a reality based on that internalization. This internalization of the event initiates a meaning-making process. Unique points of view enable unique constructions of meaning. These constructed meanings provide equally unique interpretations which lead to a reaction based on the reality constructed by that person in that moment. From a singular event, multiple realities are created because we each bring uniquely interpreted ideas and concepts to that event. A strict constructivist looks at this internal meaning-making process and believes it sufficiently describes the interpretive capacities of an individual. On the other hand, a social constructionist will begin and end in a different place.

Social Constructionism

Social constructionism “emphasizes the hold our culture has on us: it shapes the way in which we see things (even in the way in which we feel things!) and gives us a quite definite view of the world” (Crotty, as cited in Patton, 2002, p. 97). Social constructionism understands that our cultural interactions inform, and even form, our

interpretive processes. Where a constructivist would seek to understand how someone is constructing reality around an event, a social constructionist would examine the same event and ask how we came to know the knowledge we utilized to interpret the event. From the perspective of social constructionists, culture deposits the knowledge we utilize in our meaning-making processes. This shapes our understanding of reality and affects our constructive processes.

Neimeyer pointed out that social constructionists assume that we “do not have direct access to a singular, stable, and fully knowable external reality. All of our understandings are contextually embedded, interpersonally forged, and necessarily limited” (as cited in Patton, 2002, p. 96). Neimeyer is pointing out that what we know about reality is dynamic. Meanings constantly change and adapt as reality is constructed and reconstructed. Furthermore, what we know is based on the knowledge of what others know. To bring the theory to the level of individuals, Gergen (1985) stated that social constructionism is concerned with “explicating the processes by which people come to describe, explain, or otherwise account for the world (including themselves) in which they live” (p. 266). Knowledge is inherently relational. The terms we utilize in describing and defining the world are socially constructed and linguistically shared. Their meanings and their impact may vary some on a local level, but these are in constant negotiation as people continue a dynamic process of growth and understanding.

As a budding social constructionist, I would often question whether the sky was actually blue. I know the scientific reasons for the color of the sky (refraction of light, atmospheric conditions, etc.). Instead my question was always “who was the first person

to decide that the color we look up and see is blue?” Needless to say, this was a line of questioning that disturbed some people. It can be unsettling to some people to challenge the basic constructs of reality and what we generally accept as “fact” or “truth.” My question wasn’t about the sky so much as it was about the construct “blue.” If we could visit the first instance of the usage of this term and argue that blue is actually red and vice versa, then we could change the color of the sky. At least we could change the construct that we utilize to describe the hue we see when we look up at the sky. Blue is the socially negotiated and agreed upon label for a particular color and this color is associated with the sky and a particular wavelength in the color spectrum.

A more serious example of the social construction of knowledge is provided by Boydell, Stasiulis, Greenberg, Greenberg & Spiegler (2008) who examined the dialectics that developed in children who survived brain tumors. The authors found that the messages these survivors received from doctors and others impacted their lives in a variety of ways. The authors use the dialectic of competence/incompetence to describe how they navigated their world as they aged. Many of the messages the survivors received while younger were couched around the possible limitations of their success (such as not being able to graduate from high school, etc.). As the survivors completed grade after grade they were able to contradict the socially constructed limitations placed on their lives. One participant stated that they “had the doctors tell me I would never graduate high school... it made me feel like I was stupid” (p. 167). This is a prime example of some of the messages we receive that come through our relationships which then become catalysts for interpretation of both the self and the world. The dialectic arose

as this person went on to graduate from high school and they were forced to reckon their sense of competence with the continued limitations of memory, concentration and physical participation due to the earlier treatments they received (p. 167). Thus, the social message of incompetence bred a sense of limitation, which drove the person to act in a manner that contrary to the doctor's opinion. While they may have initially felt "stupid", they utilized the counter-narratives of their high school graduation to combat these socially oppressive statements. This leads me to state that social construction is a relational process whereby one person imparts knowledge (or opinion) to another person which is then incorporated into the way the receiver processes the world.

That we look up at the sky and see a color is reality for the complex visual systems of human beings. That a person who undergoes treatment for a brain tumor will quite possibly have physical differences is reality. The meaning of the sky (and/or its color) itself will be different for different people depending upon their experiences related to it. Furthermore, the reality is that the sky is not always blue, but can range in color in the evenings and mornings, providing multiple opportunities for interpreting the meaning of the sky and its colors. However, the meaning of the label we use to describe the sky is socially constructed and imparted to each of us at an early age. Some socially constructed meanings become ubiquitous and are no longer challenged. For the person who undergoes a treatment that will limit future physical activity, there are multiple ways in which social contact constructs meanings about their treatment. It has a present and future impact that shapes the ways in which a person views themselves in relationship to the rest of the world. Social constructionists understand that all of our knowledge about

the world is constructed and negotiated. Furthermore, these negotiations often happen at local levels to construct a variety of meanings related to the world. While some constructs may transcend localization, others find their meaning in the local community based on the values of that community and the force with which they assert their meanings over others.

In the case of fear, faces that express the emotion of fear can often pass that emotional state to another person. If I walk into a room and see a huge spider and my face twists to reveal the emotion of fear, then a companion might be predisposed to react with the emotion of fear until they are able to construct their own reality of the room and the meaning of the spider for themselves. In essence, I have socially conveyed my construction of the room and communicated this in a way that “prejudices” a person entering the same room.

Constructionism: Person in context/community

Grand philosophical questions arise when we talk about the role constructionism plays in our lives. We can wonder which came first, our ability to construct reality or the socially conveyed language we utilize to construct it. We might think about the subjective aims of constructivism and social constructionism and speculate about whether there is an objective reality or whether everything is a result of perspective. Theories of construction can cast doubt on the basic truths we have come to depend on to make our lives secure and stable. The rub is that we can construct any number of questions or thoughts that cast doubt onto the pervasiveness of construct theory. That is not the point of exploring these

theories though. The point is to begin to think about how things come into being in different ways by different people regardless of the similarity of their experiences.

For me, both theories provide methods that are helpful for understanding how we learn, process and construct the world in dynamic ways. Thus, as the remainder of this chapter shifts from theories of subjectivity to theories of the mind I want to utilize the term constructionism to describe a hybrid understanding of these two helpful theories. To me, constructionism means seeing *a person in context*. It means realizing the impact relationships have on our interpretations of events, as well as understanding a person's unique and creative way of putting together these messages into impactful action and thought. As Lester (2003) stated "Though each person brings individuality to the creation of personal stories, these stories are not created in isolation. The mind never works completely free of existing perspectives, but is constantly influenced by our social context and personal history" (p. 93). We should consider that it is the mind that constructs meaning through the experiences we have in life. At the same time, the content of our mind, the language we use to develop and share these meanings is filtered through our interactions with others. Language is an external source of knowledge, the ability to utilize language is an internal capacity of the evolved human brain. We cannot help but interpret experiences through social and relational lenses of meaning; yet, we cannot ignore the fact that an individual, influenced by these social constructions, is creatively manipulating them to derive unique meanings. To better understand the generic meaning of constructionism, we cannot ignore constructivism or social constructionism. Constructivism basically means the creative construction of reality; social

constructionism signifies the derivation of meaning through language passed down by means of relationship and community. Grafted together these two construct theories help us fully understand what it means to be a person (who constructs reality) in context (where knowledge and meaning are previously constructed and shared).

Subjectivity: Final Remarks

The feeling of fear is a constructed phenomenon. The threats that affect us develop through personal experiences and meanings constructed in community. In the second chapter, I discussed the growth of a culture of fear which utilized meanings passed down through the media and other communal traumas. This is a perfect example of how the feeling of fear has become uniquely constructed in a multitude of contexts. Whether it is a fear of crime, natural disaster or terrorism, people have utilized their imaginations to construct threats where they may have previously ignored them. This has the effect of creating new threats which are passed on through community interactions. Additionally, memories of the catalysts for these feelings of fear reinforce or create new beliefs systems which perpetuate fearful reactions to perceived threats.

When it comes to subjectivity and the feeling of fear, memories, beliefs and imagination form the basic building blocks of constructionism. In turn, constructionism provides a theory as to how particular threats come to have meaning in our lives and the life of a community. To feel afraid is to construct an object as a threat. This constructed threat then permeates our memories, beliefs and imagination (even as it is derived from them) creating a new reality through which we interpret the world. This new reality is formed through the language and stories of our context, but it also informs the

community perpetuating the threat as a part of the relational fabric. As we wrap up this section on subjectivity one question remains. How do human beings organize their constructions of reality as well as the constructions shared with them by others? I believe the answer to this question is found in narrative theories and therapeutic paradigms.

Psychology: Storied Lives

Philosopher Atkins²⁶ (2008) proposed that “to the extent that a life is coherent, it is so because it deploys narrative strategies, and for this reason, narrative coherence is crucial to agency, moral identity, and, ultimately, a good life” (p. 7). The last half of this chapter is devoted to understanding how narrative theories impact our lives. When I use the term narrative, I am most often talking about the therapeutic paradigm developed by White and Epston in the late 1980s to early 1990s.

While I will use the term narrative to denote particular stances and theoretical orientations, narratives are by no means unique to narrative theory or therapy. Every psychological theory utilizes narratives. We describe behaviors by telling stories concerning our reactions to particular events in our lives. We share with others what we think by verbalizing our experiences into novel systems of beliefs. We tell others about our contexts or families through stories about our experiences. Every psychological theory depends upon narratives in order to function effectively. However, in this context narrative theory and therapy are understood to be unique methods of utilizing stories in order to understand human identities and provide a method of care. Narratives are essential to our ability to relate effectively to the world.²⁷ They enable us to organize the meaning of our experiences as we construct our realities in each moment.

Narrative theory and narrative therapy provide two frameworks through which we can understand the impact of narrative methods on our view of human beings. I use the term narrative theory to signify philosophical and anthropological claims of narrative theories of selfhood. These two disciplines are front in center in helping define the postmodern self. Following this exposition of human selfhood, I turn to examine narrative therapy. This final section examines the theoretical work that grounds a narrative therapist's practice. Additionally, I propose four narrative therapeutic practices which guide the case study at the end of this dissertation.

Storied Lives: Narrative Theory and Selfhood.

How do you know who you are? When you think about terms such as self-concept, self-awareness, self-reflection and self-esteem what is the subject, the "self," that concept, awareness, reflection and esteem refers to? Every psychological system has some way of conceptualizing a "self" so that methods of practice can be derived to help that "self" when needed. Narrative therapy is no different. As pastoral theologian Lester purported, "Human beings do not simply tell stories, or illustrate their lives with storytelling. We construct our sense of identity out of stories, both conscious stories and those we suppress" (1995, p. 29). The capacity to story our lives is directly related to the capacity to develop a self in relationship to the world. We become, in a sense, the stories we tell.

Using narrative theory, I want to establish a theory of the "self" grounded in philosophy and theoretical psychology. The term "self" is often associated with "an entity existing apart from the acting and suffering human being" (Atkins, 2008, p. 1). Therefore,

I will depend on the terms selfhood or identity. The concept of selfhood, which I will define shortly, is important to narrative theories of identity. Moreover, by understanding narrative theories of selfhood, we gain an understanding of how narrative therapeutic practice may be useful to those burdened by fear-based memories.

Selfhood, according to Atkins, begins with two questions that are inextricably tied together: “who am I?” and “how should I live?” (2008, p. 1). These questions are grounded in a desire to discover the characteristics and stories that pervade our humanness, as well as the drives and purposes that form the basis of our actions. How we live arises from who we think/feel/imagine we are and vice versa. As we answer one question, it changes our response to the other; what I do answers who I am, and who I am guides what I do. Atkins defined selfhood as “an *activity* of self-constitution and self-understanding articulated narratively” (2008, p. 7, *italics author’s*). As characterized here, narrative selfhood has to do with the active and dynamic articulation of the stories we believe best represent our lives. Furthermore, our articulation of these stories enables us to create a role which further defines our selfhood. Diverse situations require different skills in order to navigate them appropriately. Psychologist Bruner (2003) exclaimed that

there is no such thing as an intuitively obvious and essential self to know, one that just sits there to be portrayed in words. Rather, we constantly construct and reconstruct a self to meet the needs of situations we encounter, and do so with the guidance of our memories of the past and our hopes and fears for the future. (p. 210)

Atkins and Bruner’s concepts reveal a dynamic sense of selfhood as an activity of continual construction and reconstruction. This feels obvious considering the varieties of experiences a person has and the numerous contexts in which we live.

Even as I write this I am reminded that I also live out stories of being a husband, father, stay-at-home-dad, son, brother, friend, doctoral student, teacher, minister and therapist. As I experienced fatherhood and needed to develop the skills necessary to take care of our daughter, I had to adjust my answer to the questions of “who am I?” as well as “how should I live?” This active reconstruction of my selfhood in the moment takes place each time I switch from writing this chapter to caring for my daughter or even talking to my spouse on the phone. My skills as a diaper changer are not quite as useful when my context calls for me to perform as a therapist. That is not to say there isn’t some overlap, but these are distinct roles I play and require me to shift my perspective on who I am about how I should act in a moment. A dynamic selfhood is not the same as a completely transient identity.

Something from each story is recorded in our memories and provides source material for its retelling. Bruner goes on to say that

It is not that we have to make up these stories from scratch each time. We develop habits. Our self-making stories cumulate over time, even begin to fall into genres. They get out of date, and not just because we grow older or wiser, but because our self-making stories need to fit new circumstances, new friends, new enterprises. (2003, p. 210)

Lester (1995) described this same phenomenon as “core narratives” which serve as the “central interpretive theme[s] that provides an individual or system with an overarching structure... that organizes and makes sense out of a particular aspect of the human condition” (p. 30). Lester also thought these core narratives “set the parameters of that individual’s sense of self” (p. 30). While new contexts require new stories, something of our previous stories remains. It may be a theme we tell ourselves or others; it may be that we try and tell the same story in another context because we think it fits the situation; it

could be as Bruner believes that our core narratives are nothing more than habits that have developed over time.

For example, if we are rejected by a group of peers, we would probably develop a narrative about that emotional situation that gets lodged into our memories. If it happens again and another rejection story is lodged into our memories we might begin to connect the stories. This could engender a belief through a new story about how we are friendless or not worthy of new friendships. This story might come to the forefront in a novel context and lead us to dismiss our importance to others. Our reticence to engage may reaffirm our story, possibly turning it into a core narrative or narrative habit.

If we say that our identity is constructed narratively, then where do these narratives come from? Language and experience are two obvious places where narrative material originates. However, these sources must be incorporated into the life of an individual in order to provide meaning or motive. Atkins identified three perspectives that shape how we construct our narratives and their interwoven meanings. She posited that

Narrative identity is not simply a first-person report but a complex structure that interweaves first-, second-, and third-person perspectives into a semantic and temporal unity with a subject who attests to that identity and in doing so constitutes it as her own; one whose claims concerning identity are subject to certain constraints and can be tested by processes of validation. (2008, p. 57)

The first-person perspective relates to the ability of a person to have “temporally extended self-awareness such that one can recognize and respond appropriately to the question ‘Who are you?’—even if who you are is in question for you” (p. 6). Related to self-awareness, this first-person perspective positions us as actors in our own stories.

Through it we see that we hold a unique perspective on the world. We experience things

and reflect upon those experiences, incorporating pieces of them into our memories and forming narratives based on our reconstructions of those memories. The self-awareness of a first-person perspective reveals us as actors in the world.

Thus, Atkins continued by stating that “My first-personal perspective implies my existence as a third-personal object in the physical world” (2008, p. 8). There is no “me” without a physical presence in the world. Atkins goes on to state “Our concerns about who we are and how we should live would be meaningless to an essentially disembodied, immaterial ego untouched by the constraints and catastrophes of the material world” (p. 32). We are aware of ourselves in part through the world we can sense. We are beings whose awareness of their place in the world is generally constituted through the ways in which we physically interact with it. The question of “how should I live?” is not just a metaphysical quandary, but a daily reminder of our humanity and our activity as beings in the world. The first- and third-person perspectives are tied together much like our questions of selfhood. To this we must add the second-person perspective which reveals its relational qualities.

Atkins believed that “We develop selfhood and acquire our practical identities only through relations with other people beginning with specific second persons who care for us in our juvenile dependency and extending to our later mature relationships” (2008, p. 45). Thus, the final component of selfhood relates to the ways we interact with others. When my embodied self interacts with your embodied self information and knowledge is exchanged. A full sense of self-awareness may be only achievable through the ways we perceive and are perceived by another. Without a mirror I would not really know what I

look like. Without the information and feedback of another “self” our narratives would lose their context and meaning. Bruner stated that “much of self-making is based on outside sources as well—on the apparent esteem of others, and on the myriad expectations that we early, even mindlessly, pick up from the culture in which we are immersed” (2003, p. 210).

Together these three perspectives provide the basic sources for the construction and reconstruction of selfhood. Through narrative theory we see that the “self” is not a disembodied immutable core. Instead it is a fluid representation based on the needs of a specific context. Selfhood is informed by core narratives, themes and even narrative habits through a variety of internal and external interactions. To be a “self” is to act, interact and reflect in the context in which we live and move and become. Bruner reminded us that

Self-making through self-narrating is restless and endless. It is probably more so now than ever before. It is a dialectical process, a balancing act. And despite our self-assuring homilies about people never changing, they do. They rebalance their autonomy and their commitments, most usually in a form that honors what they were before. (2003, p. 221-222)

If the making of a “self” is a restless and endless process, then the possibility for hope is present. If the “self” we attest to is made from the stories we tell, then stories can be re-authored. If the activity of our “self” is not amenable to the context in which we act then we can make new stories which allow us to act differently. We can be both author and editor of the selves we project into the world. I see a narrative theory of selfhood as providing room for possibility. This is not just a dissertation about fear; it is also a dissertation about hope.

Bruner believed that the stories we tell develop out of a constant construction and reconstruction of “a self to meet the needs of situations we encounter, and do so *with the guidance of our memories of the past and our hopes and fears for the future*” (p. 210, *italics mine*). This constant reconstruction of a self to meet the needs of the moment includes those moments when threats become overwhelming. As stated earlier, these emotional moments have a greater impact on our memories and thus greatly figure into the stories we tell ourselves and others. If stories are dynamic and can be re-authored, then this includes stories which reveal our fears. Narrative theories of selfhood give us permission to believe that people do not have to be or to live in ways that steal their hope. Through narrative theories we understand that people live in the middle of the books they are writing about their lives. While they may have read a good many pages and written a great deal, they are by no means finished. By the same token, while a threat or a trauma may have them reading the same page again and again, narrative theories of selfhood remind us that it is possible to turn the page and begin writing once more; indeed, it is impossible not to turn the page and keep on writing. To that end, narrative therapeutic practices provide a method for helping people re-write these traumatic and terrifying stories.

Storied Lives: A Narrative Process for Re-authoring Lives

Narrative therapy adds a practice-laden theoretical lens through which specific techniques can be applied to therapeutic situations in order to affect change. If selfhood is organized around the construction of stories that we tell to ourselves and/or others, then it would be important to utilize a psychological theory which takes into account this

dynamic view of the self and orients practices towards narrative re-construction and the re-authoring of identity. The remainder of this section seeks to introduce the theory and practices that have been developed under the auspices of narrative therapy.

What will follow is by no means exhaustive. Beginning with the theory of narrative therapy²⁸ I want to highlight two phenomena: power/knowledge and resistance. These two theoretical guides provide an understanding of how narrative therapists view clients²⁹ and the stories they bring with them. While there are a number of practices utilized by narrative therapists, I choose to highlight four of them. I see externalization, counternarratives, taking a position and re-authoring identities as particularly helpful narrative therapeutic strategies for people who suffer extensively because of the impact of threats and fear. These two theoretical perspectives and four practices develop a basic understanding of the narrative therapeutic paradigm as it applies to helping people deal with threats and fears.

Power and Knowledge.

Power and knowledge play distinct roles in narrative therapeutic conversations. Narrative therapists White and Epston (1990) utilized the work of Foucault in order to draw attention to the use of power and knowledge in therapeutic processes. According to them, “a domain of knowledge is a domain of power, and a domain of power is a domain of knowledge” (p. 22). This is not to say that knowledge and power are one and same. Instead, knowledge and power are bound together through our discursive practices. A narrative cannot be presented as devoid of knowledge, all narratives reveal something. Furthermore, narratives reveal the ways in which we understand our power in the world,

as well as the power of others over us. Power, in this regard, is seen as constraining (when the power of cultures, communities and others impact us) or constitutive (when we act with power to speak our stories into the world). As a result, each person becomes a center of power/knowledge, but is also impacted by the power/knowledge of their context as well. White and Epston stated that “we are all caught up in a net or web of power/knowledge, it is not possible to act apart from this domain, and we are simultaneously undergoing effects of power and exercising this power in relations to others” (p. 22).

Understanding power in this constitutive and constraining manner is vital to therapeutic practice. Social worker Brown (2007) argued that when it comes to power, a narrative therapist should acknowledge “both the social constraints on subjective life and the individual agency and power within these constraints” (p. 4). When the therapist acknowledges the dual role power plays, they begin to see that the person/client possesses certain abilities and agency as well as how their ability or agency has been stifled by their social contexts. However, in as much as we might see a person/client as powerful in their contexts, White and Epston were careful to state that not all persons “are equal in the exercise of power, nor that some do not suffer its subjugating effects very much more than others” (1990, p. 22). Whether constraining or constitutive, power is nonetheless unequal. Regardless of how much we are in control of our meaning making capacities, there are other forms of power which exert control over our ability to fully exercise our agential capacities.

Being situated between constitutive and constraining power has an effect on knowledge. If we cannot escape the effect of power, then all of our knowledge is somehow incomplete. Brown reminded us that “From a postmodern perspective, there are always competing stories of truth” (2007, p. 5). This reveals some of the implications of constructionism.

In this case, the *person* in context reveals that we each have a unique perspective on the world. We have the power to create stories and ascribe meaning to them. These stories divulge the truth of our constructed realities. Likewise, powerful narratives are imparted to us and they also shape our worlds. Those with the power to label objects and disseminate their findings throughout the world change how we view ourselves and our contexts. Lock, Epston, Maisel and de Faria (2005) proposed this simple example concerning the social construction of the self

If, for example, we take Mead’s (1934) view that the development of a self involves ‘taking on the attitude of the other’, and if that other’s attitude to us tells us we are ‘bad’, then we come to regard ourselves as ‘bad’. The twist that Foucault (above) adds to the Meadean view is that the other’s perceptions of what constitutes ‘being bad’ is, in large part, the result of the sedimentation of regimes of power into the construction of somewhat historically-arbitrary standards of judgment, so as to make them appear as somehow essential truths and timeless, universal moral standards. (p. 318)

There is a relationship between power and knowledge in which they work together to shape not only the world we live in but the self we see and narrate to the world.

Furthermore, it proposes that many of the constructions we live by are “historically-arbitrary standards of judgment.” This seems to propose that our knowledge, our sense of “truth,” is relative. In a postmodern context which challenges the depth of knowledge we have about any one “truth” we live by, this makes sense.

However, what do we do with those things that seem more real or fixed? In psychological circles, the limits of historically-arbitrary standards of judgment might pertain to neurochemically-based “disorders” like schizophrenia or bipolar. In these instances we seem to have evidence that there are distinct neurochemical components that alter the perception of reality of people who live with schizophrenia or bipolar. Does the postmodern challenge of knowledge and power mean that these “disorders” are relative rather than real? Simply put, no. However, the manner in which we construct selfhood and meaning related to persons with schizophrenia or bipolar should be considered relative.

When thinking about power and knowledge, Brown and Augusta-Scott stated that

Systems of classifying and labeling individuals rely upon the nexus of truth and power, legitimized by ‘experts’ such as therapists, and are often dividing strategies of power that determine which people are normal or abnormal, good or bad, strong or weak, moral or immoral. (2007, p. xvii)

In the second chapter the *DSM-IV* was portrayed as a negotiated document, manipulated by those in power, as well as those seeking power. By creating a specific manual related to mental health disorders, knowledge about these conditions has been constructed and/or co-opted in ways that often pathologize people rather than problems. The *DSM-IV*, as a widely disseminated manual of knowledge, has defined mental disorder for more than a generation. To label a person living with bipolar disorder is to present them with a set of standard criteria that informs new narratives of selfhood. It is also a means by which judgment is passed. These new narratives have multiple effects on how that person then operates in the world.

To say that bipolar disorder is socially constructed is not to deny its existence or its impact on persons and their relationships. Instead, the questions for narrative therapists are: how does the impact of a bipolar diagnosis change the ways in which a person lives and acts in the world? How does the diagnosis of bipolar impact the ways in which we represent our selfhood as both subjects and objects in the world? Thus, what becomes relative about the diagnosis of bipolar is its meaning to the individual. Lock et al. proposed that the theory of narrative therapists requires them to challenge the assumptions about diagnosis and disorder. They stated

The issue is not ‘What is mental illness *really*’, but how does a person make sense of their situation? The issue is not ‘Is there *really* a problem’. The issue is ‘What sense does a person make of “their problem”?’; ‘what relation do they have to this problem?’; and thus ‘how might their relation with the problem be changed so as to make it less troublesome?’ (2005, p. 320, *italics authors*)

The challenge related to knowledge and power is one of meaning and construction. It is about how we situate ourselves with regard to the narratives we have experienced which hold power over our lives. To say that knowledge is relative is not to deny the existence of something.

We should understand that we all have some power, but that we are all affected by the power of others, of culture and of dominant discourses which garner our attention and seek to define us. Knowledge becomes relative through the varieties of narratives that we accept or reject. We situate ourselves with regard to the messages we take in from our contexts. However, we can never take in the fullness of each narrative or experience and thus our knowledge about any one thing is incomplete and partial. The same can be said for knowledge that characterizes our selfhood. That is, any story that is told about us is incomplete at best. No global or universalized story can be said to encapsulate the

experience of all people. Thus, while our selfhood is constructed by the stories we tell, the stories we tell never reveal the completeness of an experience, event or even ourselves as characters within it. White and Epston remarked that

The structure of narrative requires recourse to a selective process in which we prune, from our experience, those events that do not fit with the dominant evolving stories that we and others have about us... much of our stock of lived experience goes unstoried and is never “told” or expressed. (1990, pp. 11-12)

In many ways we forget or push aside more than we can reveal in a narrative. This leads narrative therapists to theorize that we often live by thinly-described narratives. As Brown and Augusta-Scott (2007) noted, narrative therapists co-opted the idea of “seeking ‘thick description’ in therapeutic conversations in place of the often unhelpful thin descriptions that suppressed alternative story possibilities” (p. xii). By seeking out these “thick” descriptions narrative therapists look for pockets of resistance to power/knowledge through alternative narratives (or even alternatives within narratives) that may have been previously overlooked.

Resistance.

Psychologist Guilfoyle (2005) defined narrative therapy as a “therapy of resistance” (p. 101). This means that narrative therapists often advocate that a person, through the course of a therapeutic conversation, find some way to resist the socially dominating stories that trouble them. Guilfoyle’s focus is on the limits of one person’s abilities to resist macro-level social forces. While the term “therapy of resistance” is used specifically, I think it has some value as a broad moniker. I see two ways in which this resistance occurs. The first is through the resistance of dominant and political

psychological cultures. The second is through resisting traditional psychological models of viewing the person/client.

White and Epston stated that “we become wary of situating our practices in those ‘truth’ discourses of the professional disciplines, those discourses that propose and assert objective reality accounts of the human condition” (1990, p. 28). Narrative therapists resist the larger landscape of diagnosis and the “disordering” of people. This isn’t about the denial of the dis-ease that some people experience; instead it is a proactive stance against one-size fits all labeling that is a large part of psychological culture. Utilizing a diagnostic structure, such as the *DSM-IV*, provides a level of comfort for some people. The trouble begins when the *DSM-IV* is treated as though it contains objective knowledge about the world suitable for describing and defining the full scope of an individual’s problem. White and Epston’s position is that we should treat with suspicion that which purports to explain a person/client’s reactions without actually knowing the person/client.

Through the influence of social constructionism and post-structuralism³⁰, narrative therapy (like narrative theories of selfhood) denies the presence of a core or essential self. Psychologist Payne remarked that “The humanist philosophical tradition in Western thought has put the individual, *perceived as an independent functioning entity with a core self* at the centre both of study and of values” (2005, p. 160). Many psychotherapeutic theories revolve around the reclamation of our “selves,” as if something stable had been lost. Narrative therapeutic theory resists this notion of an essential self by offering something different. Through the utilization of post-structuralism and social constructionism, narrative therapeutic theory gives “more weight

to social and cultural influences on persons' perceptions, identities and behaviour, and emphasize the social results of human interaction" (Payne, 2005, p. 160). Instead of being born with an essential self we lost along the way, we were born with the capacity to interpret the world, with particular brain structures that enable sensory input and control activity. Through these capacities we constantly experience the world and interpret a myriad of relationships from human to cultural to environmental. Through our local knowledge, our interpretations of experiences, our co-opting of cultural narratives and our memory and imaginations we actively construct and re-construct our selfhood in each circumstance to meet our best estimation of the needs of that relationship.

Narrative therapists also resist the metaphors of depth and surface that proliferate in structuralist thought. As we noted before, one site of resistance for narrative therapists was in helping people "thicken" their narratives. Instead of looking "under the hood" to fix a presenting problem, a narrative therapist would involve themselves in "a process of deconstructing unhelpful problem-saturated stories, reconstructing alternative stories, and re-authoring preferred identities" (Brown & Augusta-Scott, 2007, p. xxx). If narratives form the basis of interpretation and identity-making, then the focus of therapy is to provide adequate space for people to explore a problem-saturated narrative. By constructing and re-constructing a problem-saturated narrative a person/client is offered the opportunity to thicken their stories and develop ideas about how they have resisted living out a particular narrative. Payne (2005) made this remark about the difference between thin and thick descriptions, "thin descriptions of life... derive from a person's unexamined socially and culturally influenced beliefs, and rich or thick descriptions...

more nearly correspond to the actuality and complexity of life as experienced by that person” (p. 30). Not only is the therapist resisting a long-held psychological belief about what helps persons, they are also providing a milieu where the person can become their own source of resistance. What happens when someone re-authors an experience utilizing thick descriptions is that a new identity is formed. This is in contrast to the idea of re-claiming an identity through careful analysis which probes the depths of people.

One final form of resistance takes place through the language of the therapeutic relationship. Narrative therapy requires us to examine the language we utilize to create the world in which conversation occurs. One example of this is developed by narrative therapists Combs and Freedman (2002) in an article concerning the use of the terms boundaries and relationships. They stated,

We do recognize that in some contexts safety is more important than interest or enrichment. However, we do not believe that a focus on safety necessitates a focus on boundaries. We find it more useful to pay attention to relationships than to boundaries. (p. 204)

For the authors, implicit in the term boundaries is the notion that a person is a self-contained actuality with a fixed identity or content. Use of this term as an organizing principle in therapeutic conversation mandates a certain view of the interaction between therapist and person/client. The authors went on to state that “Boundaries are about separation. They invite us to relate to people on the other side as ‘other,’ as foreign” (p. 205). While they acknowledge that relationships can be harmful or inappropriate, the use of the term “boundary” can be equally harmful to the ability of a therapist to work effectively. If selfhood is socially constructed, then what does the setting of boundaries contribute to the narratives a person/client creates about therapeutic conversations? From

a linguistic standpoint what is the most important part of therapeutic conversation, the manner in which we separate ourselves from the “other” or the manner in which we relate to them?

We might opine that without boundaries, anything goes. This is certainly a valid concern to a discipline (psychology) that is “bound” to operate by a certain set of rules and ethical responsibilities. Combs and Freedman acknowledged this quandary and replied by stating

Eschewing the use of boundary metaphors does not imply that “anything goes” in therapeutic relationships. It does not mean throwing away care, respect, or reverence for one another. We believe that professional helpers should not use their power to abuse, harass, or exploit the people who seek their help. Professional helpers, when practicing their professions, should put the safety, security, and desires of the people who consult with them far ahead of their own desires, safety, and security. However, none of this requires the use of metaphors or language concerning boundaries. If we may quote Greenspan (p. 132) one more time, “... There can be connection without harm, love without power abuse, touching without sexual abuse in psychotherapy-but the language of boundaries doesn’t help us see our way clearly into this arena.” (2002, p. 207)

The shift in language may seem subtle, but the effects can be large. By focusing on the term “relationship” we understand therapeutic conversations taking place through the lens of what we should be doing as professional helpers. This is in juxtaposition to the interpretation of boundaries which requires us to think first about the liabilities of the therapeutic relationship rather than its possibilities. The language we use as therapists to define therapeutic interactions shapes our view of the person/client as well as our intentions about the type of relationship we wish to build. Narrative therapists use language to resist conventional cultural definitions in order to thicken and add layers of complexity to the therapeutic milieu. Additionally, the careful construction and

deconstruction of psychological metaphors has the power to resist and re-story the political landscape of psychological culture.

Methods.

Narrative therapy adopts a stance of theoretical resistance to dominant psychological and cultural discourses. It resists the universalizing of a person's problem-saturated narratives; resists metaphors designed to probe the depths of the self; and it resists the use of psychological terminology that might impede therapeutic conversation. The remainder of this chapter focuses on four tools utilized by narrative therapists: externalization, counternarratives, taking a position and re-authoring identities. These methods of practice arise from the theoretical ground of narrative therapy and open possibilities for helping a person/client resist and re-author problem-saturated narratives. This final section introduces each method and provides a brief rationale related to how it helps people with fear-saturated narratives.

According to White and Epston (1990), externalization is “an approach to therapy that encourages persons to objectify and, at times, personify the problems that they experience as oppressive” (p. 38). Externalizing problem-saturated narratives give people the opportunity to see their problems as outside of themselves, rather than feeling as though they are the problem. White and Epston concluded that externalization (1) decreases unproductive conflict, (2) undermines a sense of failure, (3) provides for a cooperative milieu, (4) opens new possibilities, (5) decreases stress around the problem and (6) opens pathways for dialogue (pp. 39-40). A person who comes to therapy to get a handle on depression might transform their problem from being depressed to being

affected by depression. The subtle difference is that “being depressed” equates the person with the depression while “being affected by depression” places the source of the problem as external to the person. By externalizing the problem, the therapist encourages the person to name it with some measure of certainty and frankness. In the case of depression, “being affected by depression” might transform into “being pushed around by the fog” or something to that effect. The push is to get the person to name the externalized problem in such a way that they can deal with it outside of themselves.

For those whose narratives are saturated with fear the threat is already an external source of discomfort. Therefore, externalization³¹ will not only name the threat but also how the threat impacts the narrative quality of a person’s life. While the threat may take center stage in a problem-saturated narrative, the therapist should also ask the person/client to explain how the threat impacts their lives. The narrative describing the impact of a threat can shape and give more definition to the already externalized threat. Payne added that “Narrative therapy’s emphasis is always on the real effects on people’s lives of the problems they are grappling with – it is not a ‘feel-good’ therapy” (2005, p. 45). By focusing on the threat and its impact, a person names the object which threatens them using their own interpretation of the threat; they quantify the qualities of that threat and reveal how it shapes their problem-saturated narrative; finally, externalization allows the person to describe the impact of a threat on their life.³²

Once a person has externalized the problem narrative therapists encourage them to thicken its description and create a full description of the narrative. This is usually done with the help of deconstructing questions offered by the therapist. Within this full

picture, the therapist and person begin to look for sub-plots and “minor” stories that reveal resistance to the problem-saturated narrative. The purpose of this exploration is to find at least one “unique outcome.” A unique outcome, according to White and Epston can be found in past, present or future accounts of how a person understands a problem-saturated narrative (pp. 56-61). Essentially, a unique outcome is the moment when a person gained the upper hand over a problem-saturated narrative. Payne stated that these moments are sometimes found in the “kind of swiftly passed-over aspects of the person’s story which might indicate that he has demonstrated strengths, resourcefulness, tenacity, courage or other qualities which he himself is not acknowledging in the overwhelming tenor of his account” (2005, p. 68). Unique outcomes, or counternarratives, are often forgotten alternative stories that run against the problem-saturated narrative.

In fear-saturated stories, counternarratives provide the initial clues of resistance to a threat. It helps the therapist see some of the strategies people have utilized in order to negate an overwhelming reaction to a feared object. As a therapist, I see three ways in which counternarratives could be developed. We can explore previous times when a person/client was able to mitigate the effects of a threat. We can explore times in between sessions when the threat was present but the person re-storied the event to develop a new outcome. Finally, we can present the opportunity to create a future story whereby the person develops a fictional narrative in the hope of living into it when the threat reappears. In each situation, the person is enriching the fear-saturated narrative with alternative outcomes and possibilities. Seeing the problem-saturated narrative alongside

these counternarratives offers the person an opportunity to figure out their relationship with and contribution to this narrative.

Having developed a thicker problem-saturated narrative, by describing the problem, its impact and seeking out counternarratives, the person is asked where they wish to position themselves in relationship to the narrative. That is, do they wish to remain in the same relationship with the narratives they have described or do they wish to enact some form of change to this relationship? The reason this step is important is that it secures a verbal commitment to the person's relationship to the narrative going forward. Furthermore, it enables people to "take up chosen positions of their own" (Payne, 2005, p. 76) rather than the chosen position of a therapist or other self-defined experts. Once a person takes a position on their narratives the therapist encourages them to thicken this new position by elaborating on their reasoning for taking this new position.

How a person positions themselves in relationship to a fear-saturated narrative is an empowering step meant to further enhance their relationship to the narrative. By taking a stand relative to a threat, the person makes a statement concerning the continuance of that relationship. Payne remarked that the

process of telling and re-telling in response to the therapist's questions frees persons to re-position themselves in relation to their problems and to identify and take up modified or different ways of living and relating which correspond more closely to their wishes for themselves and for others who matter to them. (p. 79)

Just as we have constructed particular objects we fear, we too can construct alternate ways of relating to these objects. Regardless of whether a person chooses to continue to act in compliance or counter to the fear-saturated narrative, their relationship to that narrative is altered through the process of its re-construction.

Assuming a person vocalizes the desire to change their relationship to a problem-saturated narrative, the final tool I want to examine is the re-authoring of identities. Brown and Augusta-Scott (2007) saw narrative therapeutic practices as involving “a process of deconstructing unhelpful problem-saturated stories, reconstructing alternative stories, and re-authoring preferred identities” (p. xxiv). Utilizing a variety of questioning platforms³³, narrative therapists provide the space for a person to begin constructing a narrative which envisions their preferred identities. Re-authoring identities relies on the understanding that our selfhood is dynamic, fluid and changeable. Moreover, this process focuses on “people’s agency, preferences, and values in relationships” (Augusta-Scott, 2007, p. 252) in order to empower them to see and develop alternatives to the narratives that brought them for help in the first place. Re-authoring one’s identity is not about forgiving and forgetting. It is precisely in the remembering of our narratives that we are called into a new relationship with them so that we can face our lives and take a new position with regard to our problem-saturated narratives.

With fear-saturated narratives, re-authoring identities will not negate a threat, nor will it help us forget or make us fearless. There is no such thing as a fearless person (barring specific brain injury). However, we can place fear dominated narratives within their context in order to develop new methods of relating to the objects that threaten us. While the emotion of fear will always be with us, our ability to re-author our identity with regard to a subjective threat shows great possibility. Implicit in the re-authoring of a fear-saturated narrative is the performance of the new position with regard to the threat. Because our worlds are built at the social level, the enactment of our new narratives

becomes the pinnacle of re-authoring our identities. It is through the performance of this new narrative that we not only announce our new selves to others, but we also stake a claim to a realistic hope concerning our futures and the selves we will continue to create and relate to others.

To summarize this section on the methods of narrative therapy, I want to quote White and Epston who stated that, “It is never the size of the step that a person takes that counts, but its direction” (1990, p. 61). Any movement in any direction shifts the ways in which we tell a narrative to ourselves and others. With fear-saturated narratives the object/threat is already externalized but its impact may remain closeted. By thickening the story related to a threat, we invite people to describe its impact on their lives and see the ways in which they may have successfully interrupted its power over them. As the story thickens, perspectives change and we can invite people to begin to wonder how they want to relate to this threat in the present and the future. Any position taken with regard to this thick narrative is a small step. However, I think it is when people begin to see how a fear-saturated narrative impacts their relationships that they really begin to question whether their identity related to this particular story is valid enough to perpetuate. Re-authoring our identities is a significant step made up of many small shuffles. To re-author and perform a new identity requires strength, fortitude, resistance, resilience, imagination and hope. Most of all it requires developing and performing a new position related to a tired, problematized narrative. To wit, Brown and Augusta-Scott believed that “the most important contribution of narrative therapy is its belief that new or different stories, accounts, or representations are always possible” (2007, p. xxiv).

Summary

This chapter has asserted that memories, beliefs and imagination provided the basic building blocks of our subjective life and interpretive frames. Each person remembers particular things about experiences or events based on past experiences and proffered social and cultural narratives. Our memories change in a given situation, and we never tell the same story twice. Thus, while our memory provides a historical timeline, the stories that make-up that timeline will differ with each telling. Because our memories of experiences change we often fill in gaps with mental constructs called beliefs. Beliefs generally equate an attribute with an object and they occur when a person takes an interpretive risk to associate these two constructs with one another. Together memories and beliefs provide an interpretive frame through which we subjectively interpret the world. Finally, imagination provides the penultimate component of basic subjectivity. Through our imaginations we are capable of projecting possibilities into the future as well as seeing alternatives in a present moment. A particular fear may develop through a past experience (memory); an interpretive risk is taken which associates fear with a particular object (belief) whether or not that object poses an actual threat in the moment; a belief about an object may also be projected into future interactions (imagination) leading a person to act in the moment as though a fear will come to fruition.

From the building blocks of subjectivity, I moved to examine constructionism as the theory through which fears become a part of our lives. I saw key insights provided by both constructivism and social constructionism, and together they form an adequate

understanding of persons in context. We are individuals situated socially. Our contexts provide numerous narratives through which we can interpret the world. In addition, it is our acceptance of certain narratives as self-defining that make us unique beings in these contexts. As Lester (2003) stated “Though each person brings individuality to the creation of personal stories, these stories are not created in isolation. The mind never works completely free of existing perspectives, but is constantly influenced by our social context and personal history” (p. 93). Thus, as I creatively construct my reality I must also remember that the tools I use to create were passed down to me from others. As we saw in Chapter Two of this work, fears live in society, in the mind and in the contexts of individuals. As objects are interpreted for us and we accept the stories we are told, we then creatively construct meaning about an object/threat/person which directs our actions.

Narrative theories and therapy provided the best theories of selfhood and therapeutic practice for understanding persons in context. Following in the footsteps of narrative theorists I saw selfhood as fluid and dynamic. Through first-, second- and third-person perspectives we constantly construct and re-construct our selfhood in a variety of contexts. The first-person perspective provides us with self-awareness, while the third-person perspective relates to our embodied presence in the world. The second-person perspective reveals the influence of the outside world on our creative constructions of selfhood. While we are constantly re-constructing our selfhood in relationship to our contexts, we develop habits or core narratives (which may be seen as beliefs as well) that guide our lives and interpretations. At times, these narratives become saturated with problems and/or fears.

Narrative therapy provides a theory and method of helping people look into problem/fear-saturated narratives to find a different way of relating to them. Narrative therapeutic theories pay attention to the use of power and knowledge in order to find ways of resisting socially constructed and problematized narratives. In the praxis of narrative therapy, the theory of helping people thicken their stories as a practice of resistance to dominant and universalizing narratives provides a starting point for change. Through the externalization of the problem a person is challenged to see themselves as capable actors in their lives. As counternarratives are developed persons begin to understand their own power of resilience and resistance. As they take a position on the newly thickened narrative a person begins to re-author their identity as it relates to the problem at hand. Finally, as they perform envisioned identities a person begins to live into new narratives which make novel claims about their identity to the world.

I want to conclude this chapter by looking backward and forward. To this point I have made social, physiological and psychological claims about human beings and the world they inhabit. Each claim revolves around one subject, fear, and its meaning for human beings living in our contemporary context. I have claimed that we live in a culture of fear. I have claimed that the emotion of fear is inescapable given the structure of our brains and evolutionary history. I have claimed that we are dynamic beings with changeable identities who construct particular narratives around objects that give rise to the emotion of fear. While I have claimed much about our collective humanity and unique subjectivity, I feel compelled to look forward at another claim about human beings.

This forthcoming claim is theological and reveals the ways in which I see God interacting with human beings and the world. Through the use of process theology I will make claims about hope and its place in human lives. At the end of Chapter Three I mentioned that the emotion of fear reveals a human tendency for surviving, coping and thriving in a sometimes hostile and often unpredictable world. Not only are these tendencies revealed through the emotion of fear, but I also see them as directly related to our ability to imagine a hopeful future. That is, the emotion of fear reveals our hope for survival, coping and thriving in an unpredictable and sometimes hostile world.³⁴

As we transition from talking about fear to talking about hope I feel the need to make something clear. I do not place these two constructs together lightly. Fear and hope are very real emotions which provide the impetus for passionate action in the world. I have sought to develop the construct of fear as thoroughly as possible so that its impact is taken seriously. Fear is not something that should be brushed aside as a lack of faith or inability to trust. Physiologically speaking fear is necessary for our survival; psychologically speaking fear is essential to our ability to cope; theologically speaking fear is necessary for us to thrive. I do not see our reactions to fear as just defensive and seeking escape. For me, to run away from something is to run towards something else. In order to begin developing this relationship between fear and hope I will now turn to process theology as a meaningful grounding for a hopeful relationship between God and humanity in a sometimes hostile and often unpredictable world.

Chapter Five: Fear and Hope Theologically Interpreted

This chapter concludes our theoretical ascent by looking at human beings and the emotion of fear through a theological lens. So far, I have examined the emotion of fear through physiological, psychological and social lenses. Together, these lenses allowed us to see fear as an inescapable neurophysiological emotion which is individually activated by threats constructed through first-hand and vicarious experiences and expressed physically and narratively. Furthermore, given the evolutionary basis for the retention of the emotion of fear and the unique human capacity for creativity and imagination, I posited that fear enables us survive, cope and thrive in a sometimes hostile and often unpredictable world. Furthermore, implied in my understanding of fear is its relationship to an undercurrent of hope which is revealed in the divine-human relationship. A hope which gives rise to fear, helps mitigate its impact and provides the impetus to thrive. This chapter examines how the dynamics of fear and hope participate in the God-human relationship, as interpreted through the lens of process theology. Process theology is well-known for its reconstruction of God's power and its maintenance of human freedom. The manner in which these concepts are laid out in process theology form the basis of my understanding of the meaning of fear as well as its relationship to hope.

The main thrust of this dissertation is to understand what it means to be afraid and how our fears relate to our hopes. As a result of this focus, threats and trauma provide the backdrop of our discussions. They are catalysts for the emotion of fear and their memory

perpetuates a physical and psychological readiness which can permeate our lives. Any theology which attempts to deal with fear (both on subjective and physiological terms) must also deal with how humans interpret their natural, systemic and subjective worlds. Process theology provides a theological framework through which I can see the threats and traumas that affect us and still hold out hope for the world. I will speak more about process theology's contributions to our thinking about trauma and threats in Chapters Six and Seven.

This chapter introduces some of the major concepts of process theology as they pertain to this dissertation. I begin with a brief history of process theology in order to provide a context for this discussion. I have chosen process theology as the theological framework for this dissertation for a number of reasons. They include: how process theology relates to science, its commitment to human freedom, its realism about destructiveness and loss, its redefinition of God's power and the resulting refinement of the God-human relationship. I also see each of these reasons impacting my understanding of fear as it is interpreted theologically. Furthermore, each of these reasons provides a meaningful connection to the ways in which fear has been constructed for this dissertation. Following this discussion of process theology and its relationship to fear I will conclude the chapter with some ideas about hope. I will make a more explicit connection between fear and hope in Chapter Six; however, it is important to include a basic understanding of hope in order to guide further discussion.

Process Thought and Theology

History

The North American³⁵ version of process theology is a system of thought based on the work of Alfred North Whitehead, a mathematician and philosopher. As a professor of philosophy at Harvard, Whitehead worked to develop what he thought was a “comprehensive vision of reality” (Mesle, 2008, p. 4). This new philosophical work, often described as speculative philosophy, was an effort “to generalize our knowledge, to seek a way of understanding the world as comprehensively as we can” (Mesle, 2008, p. 12). Accordingly, process philosophy gathered the broad range of scientific knowledge of the day, brought it together into a framework of thought and then imaginatively generalized this knowledge in order to provide a meaningful way of organizing the world interactively.

The result of Whitehead’s ruminations was a philosophy which primarily described the world as composed of an infinite series of interrelated experiences. According to Whitehead (1929/1985) “The elucidation of immediate experience is the sole justification for any thought; and the starting point for thought is the analytic observation of components of experience” (p. 4). That is, we think about what we experience; we interpret what we experience; and, our lives are a series of observations originating in the elements of experience which provide the beginning point for our interpretations of the world and all that is in it. Mesle (2008) believed process philosophy rejected “philosophies and theologies that give primacy to Being over Becoming, to independence over relatedness, to things over processes, to the idea that the human spirit

is fundamentally isolated from the social and natural web in which we clearly live and move and are becoming” (p. 9). Simply put, process thinkers tend to emphasize the dynamic processes of life, experience and relationships. These processes, informed by imperfect interpretations of experiences, enable us to know ourselves as actual entities in a real world who, along with the world and God, are in the process of becoming.

The introduction of the phrase “actual entity” leads to one of the great struggles with process thought, language. Cobb, Jr. (2008) remarked that “No deeply original thinking can be expressed adequately in existing language” (p. 7). This is certainly true of Whitehead’s work, which ran counter to the prevailing philosophies of being in his time. To set his work apart from other philosophical traditions Whitehead developed new terms to describe his intentions, while at other times he would stretch the meaning of familiar terms in order to expand on its possible interpretations. There are numerous definitional resources available³⁶ which can provide a variety of interpretations of Whitehead’s terminology that can be utilized by readers unfamiliar with this philosophy.

Process Theology and God

Generally speaking, process theology follows the conceptual framework put forth in process philosophy, but most often views God from a specifically Christian point of view. To be sure, other religious traditions have found some value in process thought for their own theological formulations. I will follow in the footsteps of Cobb, Jr. and Griffin (1976) along with other process thinkers who see process theology as operating “on the one side from the perspective of Christian faith and on the other side in the metaphysical context provided by process philosophy and its doctrine of God” (p. 41). My use of

process theology stands in contrast to more traditional (often called orthodox) theological formulations of the God-human relationship. These traditional theologies often posit God as unchangeable and controlling; some perpetuate the ideas from our early Greek heritage that God is omnipotent (all-powerful) and independent; while others continue to understand God as only male (Cobb, Jr. & Griffin, 1976, p 8-10). As I will explain, process theology sees God and God's activity differently.

This introduction to process theology is divided into three parts. First, process thought is inextricably tied to the scientific understandings of the world and the way it works. Process theology continues this relationship by organizing itself around three principles—panentheism, panexperientialism, and prehension—which guide its relationship to scientific thought. Understanding the relationship between science and process theology is important. It is through this relationship that we not only understand the interconnectedness of all things, but we also discover some of the possible ways God works at the smallest levels to affect larger happenings. By utilizing process theology, I am able to reconcile the scientific methods and approaches to knowledge found in neuropsychological and evolutionary data used earlier and the exercise in constructive and contextual thought engaged through pastoral theological methodologies. Next, I want to look at how process theology explains human freedom. Narrative theories of experience and the self posit a human being who is free to change given the experiences of their lives. If I am going to posit that human beings are malleable and their selves are made up of reinforced habits based on narratives they experience, it is important to have a theological system which allows for human freedom and human possibility. Directly

related to this exploration of human freedom is how process theologians understand God's power. Understanding the ways in which God's power works in this world provides the grounds through which I can interpret fear as an adaptive and even loving response to a sometimes hostile and often unpredictable world. Finally, the redefinition of power and human freedom refines the God-human relationship. In this final portion of the introduction I want to introduce the process concepts of God's initial aim and a human's subjective aim. Through the elucidation of these process theological concepts I will draw some links to the emotion of fear and begin to introduce how I see hope relating to it. In Chapter Six a more definite link will be established which further explains how all of these concepts come to bear on the relationship between hope and fear and provide new methods of thinking and working with those who are afraid.

Process Theology and Science.

Science is an important conversation partner to the understanding of the emotion of fear presented in this dissertation. Without scientific knowledge and research, any claims I make about the emotion of fear would be incomplete at best. However, I consider much of the hard scientific data used in this dissertation to be composed of descriptive anthropological claims about the emotion of fear which establish its embodiment. Neuroscientific and evolutionary data are indispensable when it comes to understanding the emotion of fear and how it manifests in human lives. At the same time, some questions arise from this research. Namely, is the descriptive data presented in scientific data enough to understand what it means to be afraid? Can we accurately surmise what it means for a human being to be afraid by understanding physiological

data? As a pastoral theologian, my response to this question is no. For me, a more complete discussion of the emotion of fear necessarily entails a theological contribution. Moreover, by adding a theological point of view to any discussion regarding the emotion of fear enables us to draw out its connection to hope which thickens the anthropological claims we can make. Yet, given the often contentious relationship between science and theology, it is sometimes difficult to see how these two disciplines could converse to build better anthropological claims than either can make alone.

Despite the scientific gains we have made in this current era there are still a number of things that go unexplained. For all that we know about neurophysiology, we cannot explain through science alone the rise of the mind from seemingly simple neurons. Aesthetics and moral judgments are nonsensory perceptions which give rise to novel ways of interpreting the world. Despite their sometimes sensory origins, aesthetics and morality provide knowledge of the world that is not immediately testable through scientific methodologies. They are uniquely expressive due to their subjectivity, but provide meaningful ways of interpreting phenomena outside of normal sensory data. All of the things explained to us through scientific research do not give us all of the things we need to know to understand human beings. Something must give for complex anthropological claims to be made and valued. Process thinker Griffin (2000) believed we cannot think of “theology or science as an autonomous discipline with truths to be protected from the encroachment of the other” (p. 10). Any theological work (such as this one) which seeks to incorporate scientific data into its derivative meanings should endeavor to establish a relationship between these two disciplines. Griffin sees potential

in characterizing the relationship between science and theology as “going both ways, so that the resulting harmony results from a *mutual modification*” (2000, p. 8, *italics author’s*). Descriptive data is not the same as providing an interpretive framework for the meaning of a particular object. Instead, mutual modification allows for the conversation between description and interpretation to occur in a cross disciplinary fashion. This allows for the possibility that novel meanings can be derived which can help further interpret the data from diverse disciplines.

Three concepts utilized by Griffin characterize the ways in which process thought can modify science in meaningful ways. Griffin assumes that a minimal definition of science, described as “simply a rejection of supernatural interventions in the world, meaning interventions that interrupt the world’s most fundamental pattern of causal relations” (2000, p. 11) would enable the flexibility for the mutual modification sought between science and theology. A normal understanding of science sees the world as a place of cause and effect, where there are basic laws in operation that govern the behavior of particular objects. Panentheism, panexperientialism and prehension offer alternatives to the scientific dependence on sensationalism, materialism and mechanism. Prehension addresses the doctrine of sensationalism, that there is nothing beyond what we can sense, by allowing for the fact that people can sense things beyond just their physical senses. Panexperientialism addresses the materialism of modern science which reduces the rise of the human mind to a series of accidents occurring in vacuous actualities over time. Panentheism further addresses materialism by allowing for the reality of nonsensory

possibilities which interact with actual entities in order to affect their behavior and interpretations of the world (Griffin, 2000, pp. 7-14).

At the same time, these three concepts add a layer of theological interpretation to how I understand the emotion of fear. Before we can adequately explore any of these concepts it should be understood that for mutual modification to occur, both disciplines need to change. Griffin believes that theistic religions need to give up something. That is clinging to a strict and exaggerated form of supernaturalism that posits a God outside of time and the world. This understanding of a supernatural force, one that can manipulate the world at a whim to bring about specific aims, keeps any sense of relationship with even a minimal form of scientific naturalism from developing. Rather, Griffin advocates a form of theistic naturalism proposed through the writings of Alfred North Whitehead where God “in one sense transcends our particular world, [but] it is also the case that God is actually *within* our world” (2000, p. 96, *italics author’s*). By embracing a vision of God that is both immanent and transcendent we allow for the possibility that God works within the structures of the world to impact people relationally.

The concept that God is within the world coincides with the meaning of panentheism. Griffin defines panentheism as “God [being] in all things and all things are in God” (2000, p. 97). Here, the “in” in panentheism takes on significant relational qualities that speak of the immanence of God in the workings of the world. Furthermore, the “all” signifies the transcendent reality that God interacts on a grand scale which transcends human understanding. That is, if God ultimately relates to “all”, God in some ways must also transcend our normal understanding of what “in” and/or “with” might

mean. Thus, God becomes relationally responsive to the workings of the entirety of the world. This enables God to become an integral party to our fearful moments rather than a remote observer.

Through panentheism I surmise that God is present and fully relating to us in the midst of fearful moments. God is there when we recognize a threat. God is present when our amygdala fires, sending impulses through our bodies in order to react to a threat; God is present in the moments influencing choices about whether to fight, freeze, flee or appease a threat. In each occasion, a process view of fear would posit that God is present at the moment of relational inception to the abatement of a threat. Just as we cannot escape the emotion of fear, panentheism and process theologians would explain that we cannot escape God. This would mean that the emotion of fear is responded to by God in particular circumstances in order to influence the best result for a particular human being facing a threat. Through the emotion of fear, as it manifests itself from neural awakening to physiological manifestation, I would contend that we interpret God as present with us offering possibilities to aid us in that experience. I would also posit we infer God's presence among us when our fear abates, allowing us to reflect and take stock of a new situation.

The second concept which can help us bridge the gap between theology and science is the notion of panexperientialism. Panexperientialism signifies the idea that all things have some measure of unique experience. Through this concept all things are seen as both subject and object, they are experiencing and experienced. Utilizing panexperientialism, theology takes science beyond materialism and into a realm where

“the ultimate units of nature have both experience and spontaneity” (Griffin, 2001, p. 103). This experience and spontaneity come together in human beings through the rise of the mind from the neural capacities of the brain. The mind and the brain are one substance, but functions as both subject (mind) and object (brain). As Griffin stated, “We can understand that the mind and brain cells can interact, because rather than being completely different in kind, they are different only in degree, with both having feelings” (p. 79).

Panexperientialism is important for a few reasons. First, it supports the idea that God works immanently in the world to offer conditions for change at the most basic levels. Second, by allowing for the possibility of ultimate units to be both subject and object, it creates a situation where those units can experience the world and react with a capacity of freedom not understood in other conceptualizations of the world. Thus, because I am subject and object, mind and brain, human and animal I can react to experiences in unique ways that are not just determined by biological forces or causality. For human beings, who experience the pinnacle of the subject-object relationship, this freedom to interpret experiences allows us to choose our reactions rather than having choices determined biologically. Panexperientialism helps us understand the complex reactions we have to particular threats which give rise to the emotion of fear. It helps account for the differences in interpretation of an object and our reaction to it. Through individual histories and abilities to remember, panexperientialism can help us understand how some threats linger in the recesses of our minds while for other people a fearful event is experienced and forgotten. In summary, panexperientialism gives us ample pause

to consider the freedom of human beings to interpret the same object as either threat or treat. As stated before, the emotion of fear is inescapable; on the other hand, the objects we fear are unique to the history, culture and circumstance of the subject experiencing it. This gives rise to the notion that while at times we may interpret that God [uses] the emotion of fear as a loving response to the world, there are other times when we may understand the emotion of fear as unnecessarily applied to a threat hindering our ability to relate to the world in meaningful, novel and creative ways.

The final concept Griffin gives us for the establishment of a meaningful relationship between science and theology is prehension. Griffin thought that prehension emphasized “the fact that something more fundamental than conscious sensory perception is intended” and that “the perceiver actually incorporates aspects of the perceived thing into its own constitution” (2004, p. 79). Prehension has to do with our ability to sense something beyond the senses. It is a feeling that something outside the realm of our physiological sensations occurs when a relationship is instigated. It might be the sense of something beautiful when seeing a landscape or a loved one’s face again. Griffin used the synonym, feeling, as a descriptor of prehension. Our experiences are many layered and go well beyond the physical sensations of a particular moment. Griffin surmised that when we prehend, “something is *felt* and that it is felt *with emotion*” (2004, p. 80, *italics author’s*). Prehension impacts our understanding of the emotion of fear. That is, when the emotion of fear is elicited by a perceived tangible threat something about the object is prehend which steps beyond the normal bounds of physical

sensation. Furthermore, the subject which prehends an object becomes aware of their interpretation of the object's relational intent.

When a threat is recognized a relationship is established. The subject and its threat share a connection, cued through sensory data, but which imparts an almost nonsensory feeling about the impending encounter. That is, a subject might pick up on cues of aggression or interpret something dangerous about the way a threat moves which incites the emotion of fear or increases their vigilance towards a situation or object. Some animate objects may also seek to capitalize their interpretation or sense of a subject's fear-based emotional arousal and some form of power over an object. In the case of inanimate objects, such as someone who fears heights, a relationship is still established whereby a subject prehends the inanimate object as a threat. We should still consider the object/threat in these cases as relationally involved with the subject. That is, we apprehend these threats just as we might apprehend the beauty of a sunset even though the sunset has no particular emotional content or aesthetic sense to relate to us. Thus, while tall buildings or hurricanes or guns might spark the emotion of fear, the apprehension of these objects can be seen to be ultimately related to the past experiences we bring with us in to a present interpretative moment.

In summary, Griffin not only gives us three concepts which help connect science and theology, he also gives us three concepts which are integral to understanding a process view of the world and God. Through panentheism we understand how God is present with us and we are present with God in each moment. Through this universal immanence we understand how God is transcendent at the same time, as God is present to

all things in all moments. With panexperientialism we understand the entire world as experiencing, though some beings experience it in more complex ways than others. Through this view we come to see how human beings are both subject and object in each relational moment, giving them the freedom to interpret and act. In the process concept of prehension we begin to see human beings as able to interpret a world beyond physical sensations, a world which includes emotions. Prehension is concerned with the instigation, negotiation and declination of the subject-object relationship in each passing moment. To prehend is to recognize that something larger than the relationship occurs in a particular event. Moreover, both subject and object carry a bit of each other away when the relational moment subsides.

All three of these concepts help place fear into a meaningful theological framework. Through panentheism, I surmise God to be present in our fearful moments, and even makes it possible for us to use our fear to relate meaningfully to our lives. With panexperientialism we see how human freedom impacts the particular objects we fear as well as our complex reactions to them. A panexperientialistic theology accounts for both the moments when we interpret fear as warranted and used in life-giving ways and also those moments when we interpret fear as part of a life struggle which hinders a person from living into the novelty and creativity hoped for in the initial aims of God. Finally, the emotion of fear is something that can be prehend in a relationship between subject and object. Prehension describes the moments before, during and after a relational event in which something of a subject or object is felt by the other. These feelings form part of the basis for our actions to a circumstance. Through prehension the world opens up

beyond physical sensations and becomes an even more complex arena where subject becomes subject/object and object becomes object/subject. In some ways the emotions of a prehended moment are shared and acted upon and fear is not an exception. Thus, through these process concepts the emotion of fear begins to thicken with meaning and develop under a theological framework which can take the science of fear seriously.

Human Freedom and God's Power.

The conception of God's power and its impact on human freedom is one of the hallmark differences between process and orthodox theology. Bowman (2006) opined that:

If God is all-powerful, then it follows that human beings are none-powerful. Even if we might be allowed some limited causal efficacy in our immediate environment, we are certainly bereft of true power: the power to determine one's own fate or to effect real good or progress in the world. (p. 14)

Most traditional and/or orthodox theologies utilize the position that one of God's enduring characteristics is that God is all-powerful. As Bowman points out, to attribute this characteristic to God is to relegate human beings to a state of powerlessness. When one entity holds all the cards, then there is nothing left to share with anyone else. Thus, any semblance of human freedom is nothing more than an illusion. If God is all-powerful as it is traditionally conceived, then there is nothing we can do to truly impact our lives as God already controls the situations and outcomes. Any sense of power we have would ultimately dwindle in the face of God's control.

Mesle (2008) pointed out that "people work toward the idea that power is the ability to affect others without being affected by them" (p. 65). This type of power becomes a solitary condition whereby the relationship flows in one direction, generally

downward towards those with the least amount of power. Mesle calls this “unilateral” power (p. 66). It is the power to rule without being affected by those one rules over. When speaking about current societal constructions of power Sia (1985) remarked that “There is nothing ideal about longing to possess total control and to reduce others to powerlessness” (p. 80). If we understand power as only the ability to bend one party to the will of another, then God’s power is coercive and ultimately lacks compassion and ideal relationality. Instead God becomes tyrant and dictator, eschewing any form of freedom and creativity for control. Mesle argued that “To be fully unilaterally powerful, I must not be affected by people, and that means I must not care about them. Healthy caring love is just the opposite: the more we love, the more we open ourselves up to being affected by the other” (2008, pp. 70-71). Even if someone argues that God limits God’s power in the interest of some semblance of human freedom the argument ultimately fails if we cannot give up traditional notions of God’s omnipotence. Some may simply pose the question of “why bother” or see God’s power as a mystery we aren’t intended to understand.

As I have shown in previous chapters, human life is varied and rich even when we only look at the emotion of fear. Our experiences, and the cognitive and emotional capacities to interpret and creatively react to them, are relatively unique amongst the universe we understand. We should acknowledge, at some point, the mystery that is beyond our knowing. We should also reach and stretch our capacity for knowing to its human limits before acquiescing and giving up knowing the qualities of God we can surmise from the world and its interrelatedness. That said, as we continue to better

understand the world and the God who moves within and outside it, this God should exhibit some logical coherence without overestimating the impact of mystery as a fallback position. In that vein, to believe in an omnipotent God calls into question the quality of God's love.

Ascribing omnipotence to God, especially as currently constructed in traditional theology, comes with its share of problems, especially when dealing with situations of suffering and tragedy. Farley (1990) claimed that "Omnipotent sovereignty is not the power of a love that values creatures; it is the benevolence of a slave owner, who is 'kind' to slaves but still deprives them of dignity and responsibility" (p. 93). The logical conclusion of this particular understanding of God is that if God is in control, God actively has a hand in both loving and tragic circumstances and micro and macro level suffering. Furthermore, behind this statement is the understanding that God knows about the coming of these circumstances and does little or nothing to stop them. This means that hurricanes, tornadoes, tsunamis and typhoons develop by the hand of God and those who die, die at God's behest. The same could be said for terrorist attacks, oppression and other social ills that impact lives on a daily basis. By carrying out the impact of omnipotence to its logical conclusion, the quality of the love of God is simply called into question.

Process theologians take a different stance towards God's power. Utilizing the terms coercive and persuasive, process theology redefines God's power to allow for human freedom. Another way of characterizing these forms of power is unilateral (coercive) and relational (persuasive). Process theologians see the omnipotence of

traditional theologies as a form of coercive power. Through the concept of an omnipotent God, human power and freedom is non-existent. Human beings become actors in a divine drama with the script already written and the parts clearly laid out. For process theologians faced with the realities of suffering and unpredictable tragedy, a loving God whose power is coercive does not exist, and if such a God existed that God would not be worthy of worship. Therefore, something has to give; either God is described as no longer loving or the way in which we conceive of God's power needs to change. Process theologians, myself among them, contend that the best recourse for developing a coherent concept of God is to hold on to God's relationality and love while redefining God's power.

Like most terms, persuasive or relational power requires definition and structure. The same can be said for the term freedom, which I have applied to the human condition as it relates to God and the world. Together, these two concepts form a basic understanding of the ways in which God and human beings interact. Furthermore, they provide a more coherent framework through which we can understand God's love alongside human vulnerability and responsibility.

To understand God's power through a process-relational lens it is necessary to remember that God is both immanent and transcendent. In process theology these two qualities fall under the rubric of God's dipolar nature. The concept of dipolarity basically means that God is thought of around two poles, a Primordial (abstract) nature and a Consequent (concrete) nature. Cobb and Griffin (1976) stated that the abstract essence of God is "eternal, absolute, independent, unchangeable. It includes those abstract attributes

of deity which characterize divine existence at every moment” (p. 47). God’s omnirelationality speaks of God’s ability to relate to all things in existence as they come into and pass out of being. God’s relationality in this circumstance is independent of the objects relationship with God. Mesle (2008) contended that “In some respects, the primordial nature of God has no moral character; it just is” (p. 85). At this pole, God is transcendent, still connected to the world, but connected to the entire world including its historical and present moments of existence. These are the attributes of God which speak to God’s ability to know and be present to what is happening everywhere in each moment.

Speaking to the other pole, Cobb and Griffin looked at God’s concrete attributes as “temporal, relative, dependent, and constantly changing. In each moment of God’s life there are new, unforeseen happenings in the world which only then have become knowable” (1976, p. 47). This concerns God’s immanence, or the close relationship God shares with the world. God’s concrete attributes move God beyond an immutable passionless deity into direct relationship with the creation God loves so dearly. According to Mesle (2008),

God is good because God shares the experience of every creature—every pain, joy, hope, despair, failure, and triumph. God is not an *impartial, disinterested* observer of the world but the uniquely “*omni-partial*” and *totally* interested participant in every relationship there is. God knows what it is like to be you and me and “them” and the animals and plants we all eat. In the fullest sense possible, then, God is love: God is perfect relational power. (pp. 86-87, *italics author’s*)

For God to share our experiences reveals the intimate ways in which God passionately relates to all of creation. God knows and is responsive to our sufferings and joys; as we weep, God is moved to be present to our sorrow, fully understanding its impact on our

lives and share the experience with us. The same might be said for our struggles and our fears, that God is fully present to the moments of our lives, receiving in to God's self the impact of our experiences and what it means to be us in each moment. Through the Consequent and Primordial natures of God we come to see God as ultimately relational in God's own becoming, eternal yet changeable as the world continues to become. In the midst of the attributes comes the need to understand how God ultimately relates to the world using God's power in meaningfully persuasive as well as receptive ways.

What does it mean to persuade? Persuasion is a respectful negotiation of power, possibility and perspective. It assumes that both parties in a relationship have the power to decide a forthcoming action. As the moments become, one party puts forth an idea intended to help another party make the best choice available to them. To persuade is to provide possibilities while ultimately realizing that the party you are attempting to persuade has the capacity for self-determination, making their own decision by utilizing what they know and determining how they will act in accordance with that knowledge. When an attempt to persuade is made, the assumption is that we have enough information about a particular circumstance or experience in order to provide a helpful perspective to another party. Finally, persuasion assumes relationality. It assumes that I have a relationship with you that is sufficient enough for my possibilities to have meaning for your life. To want to persuade someone of something means that one person cares enough about another person to attempt to help them see alternative possibilities for their lives and experiences. All of these things are part of the persuasive process in human

relationships. For process theologians, persuasion forms the crux of the power inherent in the God-human relationship.

When process theologians talk about persuasive power, they are ultimately discussing the manner in which God relates to humanity in order to bring about the best possible outcomes in particular moments of experience (or occasions). Mesle (2008) used the term relational power in order to describe this same phenomenon. According to him relational power incorporated “(1) the ability to be actively open to and affected by the world around us; (2) the ability to create ourselves out of what we have taken in; and (3) the ability to influence those around us by having first been affected by them” (p. 73). This is a radical alteration concerning the use of power in relationship. To be in relationship is to exercise and negotiate the power between two or more parties. Rather than assume the pinnacle of power comes through our ability to command others to bend to our will, process theologians see the most effective form of power arising through our ability to be present to the moment and relationship before us. By being present, our influence develops out of the ability to incorporate meaningfully the experience of others; subsequently, being affected by this incorporation offers the best scenario for subsequent moments. In human terms, this relationship is always limited because human beings have limited knowledge of the interactions of the world and the interpretation of an experience by another party. Despite our limitations, we continue to act by engaging the world through what we discern to be the best possible activity for a given situation, including the manners in which we utilize fear to navigate the world.

Applying this form of power to God yields a special manner in which relational power is utilized. According to process theology, God's knowledge of all moments up to that point in history allows God to develop influential (persuasive) possibilities which seek the best possible outcomes for a particular situation. God's perfection in relational power stems from God's encompassing knowledge of the entirety of experience at all given moments in the present, as well as the previous moments which brought about a particular circumstance. Process theologians surmise that through God's exercise of relational power interacting with human a human being has the option of choosing God's initial aim as one possibility among many.

One way to think about fear is to understand it as a relational possibility offered by God in threatening moments. Thus, at times, to be afraid and/or act out of that fear is to live out God's best relational possibility for a particular situation. When we experience a threat, a cascade of interrelational possibilities arises; in the moment we recognize a threat, God is present with us. Utilizing God's knowledge of the history, emotional capabilities and desire for additional relational possibilities, God persuades us that fear is the appropriate recourse in that moment. Thus, God offers, through the emotion of fear, the best possible scenario to maintain relational integrity while increasing the intensity of life for all involved. Fear becomes the catalyst for recognizing God's care and concern when human life becomes threatened. When I see a spider and react with the emotion of fear a number of options may be open to me. At times, the most effective relational possibility might be just to leave it alone and escape. However, another perspective would be to stomp the spider out of existence. I have the freedom, within reason, to co-

create with God the next moment of my life. The initial aim in that moment may be to provide the spider with enough room to go about its business. God's activity through my reaction of fear and the desire to escape could provide an equally satisfying response to that moment. Given my imperfect knowledge of the past and the stories I tell myself about spiders I may or may not choose the ideal relational response.

This leads me to examine what it means to say that human beings have freedom. Freedom is not anything goes. I do not have the freedom to decide to be a bird, nor do I have the freedom to completely escape the interrelationality of the world. Human beings live in a world that constrains us. We are coerced into particular experiences by political and social systems. Cultural understandings and experiences constrain our ability to act with complete freedom. Have you ever tried to walk down the sidewalk nude? Those that have were probably met by the odd and possibly disgusted (or enthralled) stares of other people. They might have been picked up by the police for breaking a particular law, or sent to a psychologist or psychiatrist to check on their mental health. We are constrained by political and cultural systems of meaning which define certain levels of expected behavior.³⁷ Bowman (2006) stated that "Although forces beyond our control determine much about our situation and destination in life, even in the most constricted situation there is always something over which the human being, and the human being alone, has power" (p. 14).

For process theologians that power is the power of novelty. It is the power to create out of a situation the self that responds and acts in a given moment. Bowman continued talking about human freedom by stating that human power

itself is singular. It is the power to respond to one's unique situation and to become that response. It is the power of self-determination. God's self-determination uniquely affects all creatures directly. My self-determination, in itself, has a far more limited effectual range. That does not make it any less worthy of being called with the same name and given its due respect. (pp. 14-15)

Thus, within constraints we have some freedom to respond to our experiences in a manner which defines ourselves and our relationship to the world in unique and novel ways. While we have the freedom to construct ourselves in relationship to a particular moment in time, we also have freedom to choose particular paths given the constraints of the past that brought a moment in time. Sia (1985) opined that

God makes it possible for someone to do or not to do something. But the fact that one did something rather than something else or omitted to do it was that person's own choice. It was made by him or her and definitely *not* by God. God merely decided to make a number of alternatives open for that person. (p. 79, *italics author's*)

By understanding that there are possible possibilities reveals the nature of human freedom. We will always have choices related to action, construction and interpretation. Among the possible acts related to an experience, our act is but one of many; among the many persons or habits of the self we might utilize in a given moment, the construction we utilize is but one among many; and finally, among the many interpretations both during and after an experience we might develop, we choose one interpretation to primarily help us understand what is happening or what has happened.

While I cannot overestimate the reality of human novelty and freedom; I cannot, as well, underestimate the impact of divine relational power. Bowman (2006) described God's power as extending "to the knowledge and perfect assessment of all possibilities for human beings, their communities, and their surroundings", and therefore "[Human beings] cannot act in our own best interests, let alone in the best interests of those we love

and those yet unknown, without connecting ourselves to divine power” (p. 15). In order to realize the pinnacle of human novelty and freedom a connection to God’s relational power is a must. Thus, returning to the spider example without a connection to God’s aims in a particular experience of fear there is little possibility that I will choose the best relational choice among the options available. The connection to God’s aims is often understood through our awareness of how God has acted in the past. Our present interpretive milieu is influenced by the memories of divine-human activity we interpret as important.

Hearing and acting upon the persuasive option proposed by God in a particular fearful circumstance requires recognizing the vitality and life in a relationship with God. While we may never have the kind of direct access to the mind of God in the moment, we can act upon the previous aims we are aware of and hope that they provide a close approximation of God’s aims for the present. The key, it seems, is acting responsibly to what we understand our options to be given the memories of the divine-human relationship we carry with us. Thus, instead of stomping a spider the best relational option might be to capture it and release it outdoors or ignore it and let it return to where it came. Alternatively, there may be times when the best relational option might be to stomp a spider, especially if I am threatened by a poisonous variety from which there seems to be no escape. Using process theology we can interpret the emotion of fear as one possibility through which God can interact with human beings in meaningful ways to possibly bring about novel relational interactions. Through this interpretation, fear becomes an emotional alternative which increases the beauty present in the world,

orienting us towards novelty in the midst of a threat. As we reflect upon our encounters with threats, the use of fear as an initial aim may become more apparent. The struggle around the emotion of fear is when it becomes a maladaptive emotional response to the world a person inhabits.

Initial and Subjective Aims.

The question of freedom, relational power and novelty come together through the understanding of how the relationship between God and humanity is operationalized through the aims of every interaction. Thus, the final component from process theology which can aid our understanding of what it means to be afraid stems from understanding the concepts of initial and subjective aims. To be afraid is to orient ourselves related to particular threats in the environment in order to bring about some form of relief from the fear we are experiencing. It is to aim our activity for a specific purpose and goal. In process thought initial and subjective aims reveal part of the possible forms of activity humans can undertake at a given moment. The aims we undertake are related to the possibilities which might occur relative to an experience and our interpretation of it. The remainder of this section on process theology will seek to define each of these aims and open a discussion concerning their relationship to adaptive and maladaptive fearful states of being.

The easiest way of conceiving of initial and subjective aims is through the genesis of their creation. An initial aim can be considered to be the best possible action offered by God at a particular moment in time given the circumstances a person finds themselves dealing with. McDaniel and Bowman described an initial aim as “The way that God is

continuously active in the world by providing potentialities for becoming, which add value to the world and enjoyment to the experiencing subject... [it is] the infusion of value into the initial stage of an occasion's becoming" (2006, p. 7). I have already proposed that the emotion of fear can sometimes be offered as the best possible action and reaction to a particular experience. The concept of an initial aim takes this one step further by claiming that God's initial aim is intended to add value and enjoyment to the world and the person experiencing a particular moment. Cobb thought the notion of value pertained to something specific to the situation rather than a general term. Value is related to the perception of contrast in a particular experience. Through contrast our intensity of feeling related to a particular experience is heightened to the point resulting in novelty and creative expressions related to our interpretation of that experience (2008, p. 58).

It may be hard to think about the emotion of fear as something that adds value or increases our ability to enjoy life. However, this can clearly be the message of our fear in the face of something that threatens our very existence. Our initial aim in threatening situations is towards survival, towards the continuation of life in the face of something that may threaten it. There is enjoyment to be found in the possibility that life can continue despite the objects that persist in threatening that life. There is value in believing that the God who loves and cares with and for us also attempts, through the emotion of fear, to share with us that message of care and beauty enhancing activity. Hope is found in the midst of these initial aims, as they attempt to aid us in gathering the courage to act responsibly and lovingly in the face of threats.

However, initial aims are just one part of the equation related to how we act and react to the experiences of our lives. The lure of God's aims, if recognized and followed, should overwhelm any possibility we could think or imagine in a given experience. However, these initial aims are not the only possibilities available to us. There are always competing aims open to us in particular circumstances. The aim we ultimately end up choosing is the subjective aim. McDaniel and Bowman (2006) termed our subjective aims as "The individual entity's own decision about what is to become. It springs both from the initial aim provided by God and from the standards of value inherited from other occasions in the concreting entity's past" (p. 8). First, the concept of concrecence relates to an "actual entity's process of becoming concrete. It means sorting out the many things that might be and settling on what will be" (Mesle, 2008, p. 101). Basically, a subjective aim is the possibility we choose to actualize given the possibilities presented to us in an initial aim coupled with the habits of the self we have cultivated and the moments of experience that bring about a particular situation. Thus, my decision to stomp a spider rather than capture and release it is my subjective aim for relieving myself of the threat that is causing the emotion of fear to stir within me. This aim stems from the fearful habit I have developed related to all spiders; it relates to the options I see that are immediately available to me to alleviate the threat; and, it does have some form of value to me in that it relieves me of the stress and physiological reaction I experience upon coming into contact with a spider. I will also admit to moments of guilt for ending a life and for cultivating habits which include the death of some object in order to maintain my own sense of security. As Bowman pointed out,

Creatures with significant freedom, creativity, and power can destroy as rapidly and as thoroughly as they can create. Such creatures can also suffer in conscious, lasting, and perhaps inescapable ways; their pain detracts from the intensity of feeling God aims to achieve. (2006, p. 18)

The freedom to choose a subjective aim in the midst of an experience is terribly liberating but also fraught with the consequences of our choices. At times, the habits we have cultivated through the multitude of subjective aims we have enacted create more pain than enjoyment or value. We become caught in patterns which create destructive cycles of becoming. With the emotion of fear, we can create habits which attempt to remove us from live-giving relationships. We might fear large groups of people and thus cultivate habits which aim us towards isolation; we might fear crime or terrorism and develop new habits which prematurely develop suspicion towards an unknown other or a particular group; we might fear hurricanes and move ourselves away from family and friends in order to maintain safety and security no matter the cost. In the wake of trauma, we cultivate habits out of our memory of that fear to protect ourselves from further injury. When a new situation with a threat arises, these subjective habits detract from the enjoyment and value God intends to add through the initial aims of a given concreting moment. Our past experiences overcome the possibilities of a moment (even a threatening moment) and we become stuck in the necessity of survival without being able to access the coping mechanisms related to the emotion of fear and the intent of an imaginative thriving life following a threatening encounter. To be sure, in threatening situations our survival will almost always be paramount in relationship to these other meaningful categories. However, to be stuck in “survival mode” alone is to forsake the

possibility evident through an initial aim for the increased enjoyment of one's life and value of the contrast in intensity afforded one by these fearful situations.

Process theology provides an invaluable theological framework through which we can interpret the emotion of fear as an adaptive, even hopeful, response to a threat in our lives. Up to this point, this dissertation has been concerned with developing a full sense of what it means to be afraid. I have shown how the emotion of fear has crept into our lives, creating a culture that goes beyond anxiety alone. In our culture of fear, objects are shared through information systems which have been incorporated into the structure of our lives. The traumas of faraway places have come to rest in our homes creating a level of fear which at times guides our activity and relationships. These traumas activate particular parts of our brains, preparing us to respond at the slightest hint of provocation and threat. Furthermore, these traumas and threats invade our memories, creating beliefs where there may have been none before and coloring our imaginations, which affects our ability to develop possibilities for action and interpretation in the face of threats. These memories, beliefs and imaginative possibilities shape the habits of our lives, which in turn reinforce some of the fears we narrate into our experiences. As we move from experience to experience, these subjective aims point us in particular directions giving rise to the emotion of fear even when it is unnecessary. At the same time, there are moments in our lives when we are truly threatened and it is in these moments that God's initial aims are found in the elicitation of the emotion of fear and its concurrent behaviors. Here, the emotion of fear not only enables us to survive in the face of a threat and cope with its aftermath, but it also reveals a measure of hope. That is, if God's initial

aims are for increased enjoyment and added value to our lives and world, then the emotion of fear reveals an adaptive orientation towards future moments of life. The emotion of fear is not just a fight for survival; it is also a mechanism by which the value of our lives is revealed through the possibility of continued existence. Thus, when we are afraid we do not just run from a threat, but we run towards something else. In that positive movement towards something else, I believe a profound sense of hope can be realized. Thus, I want to close this chapter by introducing what I construe to be the meaning of hope that will guide the rest of this dissertation.

Understanding Hope

Hope presupposes a positive orientation towards the future and what might be. While it is often thought to be the stuff of dreams and possibilities, it is in reality so much more. Popular uses of the word hope pertain to things like winning the lottery. New Year's resolutions might be construed as our hopes for new habits in future days. While there is nothing inherently wrong with thinking or using hope in this way, I want to describe it differently. For me, for hope to carry any weight, it must add value to our lives and direction and meaning to our passions. In this final section, I develop a notion of hope grounded in both possibility and probability. I do this so that it can shape our habits or help us develop new ones which might direct our passions into novel manners of interpreting our lives. To create this understanding of hope I want to explore it in two contexts. The first is hope apart from theology. The second is hope as a part of theology.

Hope Apart from Theology.

Hope is often seen as something uniquely human. As a product of our imaginations and experiences, hope is, in part, the sense of something yet to be but nonetheless attainable. Erikson (1964) called hope “*the enduring beliefs in the attainability of fervent wishes, in spite of dark urges and rages which mark the beginning of existence*” (p. 118, *italics author’s*). Erikson found hope to be present from the earliest stages of our lives. In his estimation, “Hope is both the earliest and the most indispensable virtue inherent in the state of being alive” (p. 115). Hope, in Erikson’s writings, takes on an early role in the development of the self. It becomes something which infants utilize in order to develop trust in the world around them. The responses infants receive allow them to continue to trust and hope as the world continues to change shape around them. Looking at Erikson’s definition of hope we can see how it is grounded in a relational matrix that engenders possibility and probability. Erikson uses the terms beliefs and wishes to describe both a state of being and the tangible stuff of our hopes. These terms speak to the possibility of something occurring despite its absence in a present moment. To believe and to wish are in many ways to hope for something’s becoming at a future moment in time. Hope, for Erikson, encompasses more than just the operations of the mind as it seeks to navigate the world in novel ways.

Erikson also grounds his definition in the probable by utilizing the term attainability to further operationalize what it means to have hope. Thus, not only is hope something imaginatively possible, like winning the lottery, but hope should also reveal something probable and/or attainable. The concept of probability differentiates hope from

dreams that run amuck. Psychologist Stotland (1969) examined the psychology of hope and stated that implicit in the meaning of hope “is an expectation greater than zero of achieving a goal” (p. 2). Thus, while I can imagine becoming an astronaut and feeling weightlessness, I may be better served by hoping to have the resources someday to fly in one of the commercially available low-orbit space flights. The difference between the two is attainability. I do not have the aptitude, time or physical abilities at this point in my life to suddenly become astronaut material. At the same time, I may be able to attain the resources to experience some of the same things astronauts’ experience.

Furthermore, attainability of a hope that we carry with us can provide passion for purposeful behavior. Much like fear, the emotion of hope orders our responses to situations. It provides an emotional possibility for a particular moment leading us into the next moment. Stotland (1969) wrote that “with hope, man [sic] acts, moves, achieves. Without hope, he [sic] is often dull, listless, moribund” (p. 1). By understanding hope in this manner we see that hope provides both emotional content directly effecting the present with some inclination towards future activity. Baumgartner, Pieters and Bagozzi (2008) described both fear and hope as anticipatory emotions, meaning that they are emotions “currently experienced due to something that could happen in the future” (p. 685). In Chapter Two, I posited that fear is a present emotion with a direct object/threat attached to it which sometimes gets projected into future situations. The same defining structure is present in this understanding of hope. That is, hope is a present orienting emotion with an attainable goal attached to it which gets projected onto a future moment.

Hope as a Part of Theology.

It is practically unimaginable to conceive of the Christian faith without some measure of hope being a part of its interpretive framework. At the same time, theological constructions of hope tend towards conceptual rather than practical emotional concerns. Looking at hope through both process and practical theological lenses provides us with the resources to not only accept some of the conceptual framing of hope but also bring it back down to practical terms as well.

In process theology, hope is predicated on the foundation that “there is a God who intimately relates with the world in each instant” (Brizee, n.d., p. 1). Any initial sense of hope that human beings might derive is based on the sense that God is *with* us in a world that can sometimes feel hostile and unpredictable. Within the Christian tradition, Brizee saw that hope often rests in “both looking forward and looking backward. This tradition is filled with the hope that there will be an end of time” (p. 2). Process theology, in part based on the openness of the future, tends not to base its hope in eschatology, as “There is no fixed point out in the future at which time something is already determined to happen” (Brizee, p. 2). God knows the past and the potentials and possibilities of an open future. If hope cannot be found solely in the certainties of the future, then it seems obvious to rest our hope on the visions of the past we reconstruct. We might hope to wander the hillside with Jesus or witness the power of his words and peace of his presence. Living in moments past tends to negate possibility or potentiality. Certainly, there is much we can learn by remembering (positive and negative). However, a constant sense of hope based on the understanding that things will never be as good as they were

ultimately violates “the ongoing creativity of God. To place such emphasis on one particular historic time or one particular environment is to miss God’s continuous creative activity in the world” (Brizee, n.d., p. 2). Thus, a process theological hope should be seen as something without temporal discrimination. Yes, hope is most often understood as based on potentialities and possibilities. Yes, hope has some connection to the ways in which we remember and reconstruct the world we live in based on the past. Yet, hope must also encompass each moment of creation that continually occurs around us. The concept of hope in process theology thusly “lies in the creative process rather than what is created. Hope is in the dynamic, the bubbling, the self-creation of each moment” (Brizee, p. 3). We cannot simply hope, with certainty, in the coming of a particular moment in the future. Through process theology, we can hopefully interact with a God who knows the potentialities of our lives, who examines and puts forth creative possibilities and who continually works to persuade us to live them out. While hope may ultimately enable us to reach for the possibilities of what may come, it also emboldens us to remember the presence of God when our lives are broken and our dreams die. We can hope in the moments of broken dreams because God is present in them with us, continuing to provide the possibilities inherent in God’s initial aims if we can apprehend and act upon them.

Since process theologians base their understanding of hope on the creative activity of God, it is obvious that hope requires a more active than passive stance towards life. Beardslee (1972) stated that hope “embodies also the elements of fulfillment and participation which gives this hope a processive character and makes it possible to

interpret it in a process framework” (p. 131). Thus, much like the psychological definition of hope, hope in theology should also reveal both anticipatory and attainable qualities. We are active participants in our lives and the hopes we bear should reveal our continued attempts at actively accessing the divine creativity of each moment and attempting to relate that creativity to lives we lead. Our practical hopes rest on our ability to live out the possibilities put forth in God’s creative possibilities in each moment. We look forward to God’s persuasive activities with the anticipation that novelty and creativity will bring greater harmony to the world and to our lives, remembering that God only offers the possibility of attainable hopes; God cannot guarantee that they will be appropriated and realized.

Seeing hope through theoretical and theological lenses provides for a definitional structure which enables me to interpret hope meaningfully. Through the research presented here, I think hope is best conceptualized for this project as an anticipatory emotion grounded in the attainable potentialities and possibilities based on current circumstances, an orientation to the future and faith in the creative and close presence of a loving and persuasive God. Hope provides the passion for activity and reveals the potential of an open-ended future in which novelty and creativity can increase the intensity and harmony of the self and the world. Furthermore, by defining hope in this manner it enables us to begin drawing some connections between fear and hope. Although much of this work will be done in Chapter Six, there are two implications that arise from viewing the emotions of fear and hope through a process theological lens. The first of these implications derive from the connectivity of hope and fear as anticipatory

emotions. Namely, that there is an undercurrent or subtext of hope which is present before and during the moments we are afraid. The second implication relates to an idea mentioned in Chapter Two. That is, that hope is the antidote to fear. This implication has more to do with how hope is utilized with persons who live fearfully in order to develop thickened fear-based narratives which see the total human response to threats and trauma.

Conclusion

This chapter argued that psychological research, while helpful, does not fully provide an explanation of the meaning of particular concepts such as fear, freedom, and hope. Through the introduction and use of process theology I have provided a grounding framework for understanding fear from a theological perspective. I endeavored to provide a framework for thinking about the connection between science and theology. I examined the theological argument for re-interpreting God's power as persuasive which allowed for human freedom and an open future. Finally, I looked at the process understanding of initial and subjective aims in order to develop a notion of what fear might mean in a variety of circumstances. The final section of this chapter examined the emotion of hope as both a theological and psychological construct. A definition of hope was created by synthesizing the data presented in order to heed both its theological and psychological roots and ground it in the human experience of God the present as it looks forward to participating in God's creative acts.

Chapter Six: A Pastoral Theology of the Relationship Between Fear and Hope

This chapter serves as a bridge between the groundwork laid in the previous four chapters and the practical applications in the following chapter. In essence, I am both looking forward and looking back. Throughout this dissertation I have utilized Whitehead's image of a plane taking off and landing in order to describe the structure and flow of this work. At this point in our flight, we reach its pinnacle. This is a place where we can both look back at the theories concerning fear that have lifted us to this point, and look forward to the practical applications of this dissertation for the clinic. It is also a place where the discipline of pastoral theology takes prominence as an interpretive discipline for all of these diverse understandings of fear and its relationship to hope.

Pastoral theology is the discipline whereby pastoral experiences and observations are brought into conversation with theological and cognate secular resources, providing a context for critical reflection in order to construct new theological and psychological resources for pastoral practice. This definition of pastoral theology could be construed as an objective attempt to appropriate resources to enable novel theological structures to emerge concerning the emotion of fear. In part, that is the intent of this project. However, before continuing I want to offer a thick reading of this definition. First, the definition begins with "pastoral experiences and observations" which I take to mean that any pastoral theological project is contextual. It arises from the theology that is deliberated and embedded in our lives, from the crux of praxis where theory and practice meet to

form our activities and interpretations of the world. Second, this definition requires “conversation with theological and cognate secular sources”. The context of pastoral theology is rooted in both theological disciplines and others like anthropology, psychology and social work. A conversation, in this case, implies the ability for each discipline to contribute meaningfully to the question at hand. The hope is not to subordinate a discipline, but to fully recognize the possible contributions each brings to bear on the interpretation of what is being discussed. Finally, the result of pastoral theological deliberations is the emergence of “new theological and psychological resources for pastoral practice.” Pastoral theological thoughts have practical implications. They begin in the experienced world and end there as well. The intent of pastoral theological conversation is to contribute meaningfully to the day-to-day practice of human life. We aren’t just developing theological material for a community of faith. The hope by providing the milieu for conversation is that our theological understanding of the world changes and a contribution to the cognate secular resources is made which further enriches the overall discussion.

As part of a pastoral theological project, this chapter seeks to critically reflect upon the diverse knowledge presented in the first four chapters in order to develop a novel practical theological understanding of fear and its relationship to hope. As is often the case with pastoral theological thought, a by-product of the analysis is a contribution to theological anthropological claims. Thus, the results of this particular critical reflection are threefold. First, I want to affirm some theological anthropological claims based on the research presented in this dissertation. Second, I will pull together these diverse bodies of

knowledge into a novel understanding of the relationship between fear and hope in a theological context. Finally, as a result of these initial claims, three themes (surviving, coping and thriving) will emerge to help guide those in pastoral and clinical settings to a better understanding the meaning of fear and how they might draw a relationship to hope. These themes will be put into practice utilizing a case study and current research on Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in Chapter Seven. Finally, this chapter is built around a series of propositions based on an interpretive lens applied to the research presented in previous chapters. In total, fifteen propositions are developed which make a variety of claims related to humanity, emotions, and more specifically fear and hope.

Theological Anthropology

In order to understand the relationship between fear and hope we must also develop an understanding of human beings and the divine-human relationship. To that end I want to develop several propositional statements that reflect what I have put forth in the previous four chapters. When I attempt to understand human beings and activity, I tend to fall back on my work as a clinician and social worker. In this model of thinking, ideas about human beings develop out of a biopsychosocial-theological model of understanding. While this model could be seen as focusing on the individual, I see it as both internally and externally relational in focus. The biopsychosocial-theological model utilizes an internal relationality to meld together disparate sources of anthropological understanding in order to create a particular view of human beings. Furthermore, this model is externally relational not only in its use of the social situation but also in its view of a person in their context. That is, while I may use research to describe particular

understanding of human beings as individuals, it is always with an eye towards the larger relational milieu through which that person interprets themselves. In this section, four propositions are developed which directly relate to this model. A fifth proposition, regarding human beings and emotions is offered to complete the development of this particular theological anthropology.

Proposition 1. Human beings are social creatures living in an interdependent world. We live and move and become in relationship with and reaction to the world around us. We have built complex systems of language and thought through which a variety of messages are shared across great distances.

We live connected lives. Human beings are intimately connected to their environments, experiences and one another. In Chapter Five I noted that process theology offers a view of humanity that extends our relationships to the entire world. As the world moves in concert to maintain its physical shapes it is forced to relate. In these ultimate relationships we see God moving throughout and within the world to persuade it to new realities and novel becomings. We are in a constant state of interrelatedness with our worlds and these relationships change and evolve.

We rely on our environments to sustain our physical and mental health. Human beings cultivate and destroy land and animal species in order to maintain and adapt to an ever changing world. The world, in return, adapts to human involvement as best it can to continue its survival. Our experiences of the world run the gamut from joy to despair, hope to fear. Even as we separate experiences by the conditions of their happening, they are more interrelated than we sometimes care to admit. Wondering how God interacts

with the world, process theologian Thompson stated that God does so “By offering the best possibilities for that entity’s future based on that entity’s accumulated past” (p. 22). Even in temporal circumstances we are bound by the interrelationship of past, present and possibility. In some ways, it is the interrelationship of seemingly disparate forces that help direct and give passion to what is occurring before us. Might we know love without also knowing its absence? Possibly; yet, we are most apt to recognize moments of love by contrasting them with moments when love was absent.

As we experience the world we incorporate those experiences into narratives which further inform our lives. We tell stories about our lives, the world and the people we encounter. These stories are another interrelated reality based on the intertwining of emotion, thought and action relative to the experience an interaction with the world. Even our own internal reflections about experiences carry an interrelated twist as they require us to incorporate a variety of experiential data into a cohesive thought through which we can develop a better understanding of the world we inhabit. In turn, these stories serve as reminders of our lives and the interconnected web in which we live and move and become. Thus, our ability to communicate with another human being not only helps create the worlds we interpret, but the selves we place in those worlds. Furthermore, as language and narratives are told communities develop and relationships form. We might gather around a specific experience or empathize with another’s stories. Human beings have lived in community for millennia, developing patterns of life and stories which guide behavior and develop habits. Today, our stories are no longer bound by the

particular communities in which we live. Instead, we have the ability to share a story or experience across vast distances with little effort.

We often speak of the world as a global community, which expresses both its vastness and its intimacy. The concerns and fears, hopes and possibilities of the world are at our fingertips. We live in a world where we can experience the devastation of a hurricane in Colorado as it happens in Louisiana. We can watch buildings collapse through violent means as the destruction is replayed over and over again on the television. Messages pertaining to the threats of the world are readily available for our consumption and interpretation. We know of the deaths of protestors in Iran as they happen, medical emergencies and terror plots in Britain make our nightly news and even the murders, as aberrant as they are, in our own towns are the lead stories we tune in to. As we witness these threats, they invade our communities and relationships. This results in a heightened level of vigilance concerning our relationship to objects in the local and broader world.

Fear requires a relationship. At its initiation, it is bound to a real or imagined object, person, place or experience. At the end of the second chapter, I noted that fear requires an object that can be discerned as a threat. When we are afraid we relate in some manner to a threatening event, person or other object in the world. Furthermore, the relationship between person and threat are mediated through a variety of first- and second-hand experiences. That is, threats are communicated by our experience of an object and also through the communication of another's experience of an object.

Moreover, a fearful relationship with a threat is not predicated on the actual proximity of the threat, but the felt proximity of the threat.

When a threat is experienced through a first-hand relationship, it can be thought of as “my fear” in the sense that one’s experience with a threat is providing the impetus for a fearful emotional response. When the emotion of fear is mediated through a second-hand experience the claim on the fear becomes more nebulous. That is, if a person becomes afraid through their relationship with another person who experienced a threat, then what is thought to be “my fear” is actually “our fear/s.” What this may tell us is that the social communication of fear may give rise to communities that act out preferred identities based on a vicarious understanding that some object, person or place is a threat.

Ultimately, I see fear as being relationally grounded in the perceived threat of an object, be it human, animal or otherwise. The notion that a threat has to be perceived or interpreted as such speaks to the ability of human beings to accept or even counteract a message they are receiving. While we cannot overestimate the impact of an interrelated world, it also does us no good to underestimate the unique resources each person brings to these same relationships. Even intertwined human beings carry with them unique interpretations of experiences, unique physical attributes and unique modes of interpreting the world. That said, in certain circumstances a group within a community might harbor a collective memory or narrative that heightens their awareness to particular threats. Together, this might provide for a relational milieu which pushes forth particular ideas, reactions and beliefs about objects that have been carried forward as threatening.

Proposition 2. Human beings are dynamic creatures. We are adaptive, changing and always in the process of becoming within the interrelated structures of the world. The human self is developed out of habits adopted throughout our lives that better enable us to adapt to a variety of settings and circumstances. Given the longevity of our memories and the possibilities of our imaginations, we have the flexibility to re-story our lives in order to react differently to similar situations we experience.

What does it mean to be a human being in process? Earlier I stated that human beings share a significant neurophysiological location with a variety of species. The amygdala assures that we will experience the emotion of fear just as any other animal might when faced with a threat. At the same time, it was understood that human beings possess an ability to interact with the world at a greater level of complexity than other known species. That level of complexity is seen in our ability to adapt, in a variety of ways, to a changing world, inhospitable environments and novel experiences. While we are, in some ways, beholden to the impulses of our amygdala in the face of a threat, we are also interpretive creatures whose reactions cannot be wholly predicted. In sum, we change, adapt and become as we reflect and interpret experiences while they happen and as we remember/imagine them. Furthermore, we plan. We develop imaginative possibilities for possible encounters with real and perceived threats. Finally, our ability to adapt relates to our production of a self at different points in our lives.

This proposition posits that human beings are not only physically adaptive to their worlds, but also psychologically adaptive as well. As adaptive creatures we possess the

unique ability to imagine new ways of interacting with the world and its circumstances. To be human is to possess an adaptive and changeable self. Certainly, we do some things habitually. As stories and interpretations of experiences are reinforced, we develop propensities to react in certain ways. Yet, these reactions remain mere possibilities, they are not absolutes. The basic certainty of the human self may just be that the self is always in process. While we may form habits, habits can be broken, stories can be re-authored and relationships with objects can change.

Our malleability is reflected in the simple inability to tell the exact same story twice. Our memories function as guides to our experienced world. Yet, our memories cannot capture every possible input related to a particular experience. As we story our lives over time, our memories focus on particular aspects of an experience. Telling these stories re-creates the worlds of those moments, but the moments are inevitably incomplete. In a subsequent recount of the same story, new connections reveal new details about the experience. The present moment/mind may be similar, but is never the same. In some ways this reflects an open memory that is fluid despite the constraints of a particular experience. By stating that our memories of particular experiences are constructed and re-constructed in each new moment, reminds us that not only is the past open to re-interpretation but the future remembering of our experiences can change as well. This flexibility in our memories serves us well as we seek to understand the threats we fear and how we might react and interpret them differently over time. While we might fear a particular object today, our relationship with that object can change over time, altering and challenging our remembered emotional responses.

Proposition 3. Human beings are unique and adaptive physical actors in the world. While we share some neurophysiological similarities with other animal species, we also have unique capacities not found in other animals. Therefore, while fear is expressed similarly across species, human memory, belief systems and imagination create unique conditions for the expression of fear in human beings.

There are two claims relevant to this proposition which help us understand the emotion of fear. The first claim relates to the neurophysiological similarities we share with other species. The second claim reveals that while we are similar to other species, we also have unique capacities which make our interpretation of fear unique as well. In Chapter Three, I put forth the argument that the emotion of fear is an inescapable reality for human beings. Given the evolved neurophysiological structures of our brains there is no possible way to escape the experience of fear when encountering a perceived threat. Granted, particular forms of brain injury localized around the amygdala have proven to stunt, hinder or abolish the emotion of fear. This evidence, however, only serves to further prove that fear is a biological reality that we will experience in our lives. Studies with a variety of species of animals continue to point to the amygdala as the aggregator of data related to threats. The amygdala is found in a large variety of animal species and is plays a significant role in the behaviors we enact when facing a threat.

Human beings are not just any species though, we understand ourselves as having the most complex brain of all the species in the known world. This complicates any reductionistic view of fear that places our physiological capacities as explicitly determinative of behavior. We have the capacity to experience the emotion of fear, which

is the inevitable conclusion of any study of our neurophysiological structures. What is also evident from these studies is the unique manner in which our experiences of the world shape the interpretive milieu in which we live. Thus, coupled with this neurophysiological ability to experience the emotion of fear, we also have the capacity to remember, imagine and communicate in more complex ways than other species. The tension between our physiological and interpretive possibilities cannot be ignored. Thus, while I might say that the emotion of fear is inescapable, the objects that we interpret as threats cannot be described with the same level of certainty. Our complex human minds interpret, value and ascribe different qualities to the same objects. This complexity results in a situation where the breadth of the things we find threatening can be increased depending on the interpretations we apply to our experiences.

The experience of fear, as attested to earlier, is shared relationally. The empathic capacities of human beings enable us to experience the emotions of others and react accordingly. For example, if we were hiking up a trail and suddenly a couple people come running down the mountain towards us bearing facial expressions of fear, then we will most likely adopt some of their emotional reactivity even if no words are shared about the threat. Thus, as we continue to hike up the hill (assuming we continue of course) we will be more vigilant about our surroundings, utilizing our imagination to develop the possible threats we might encounter. In this instance we have utilized empathy and our unique memories, beliefs and imaginations to posit that something threatening is forthcoming. We create a threat in reaction to the fear we have experienced from someone else. We might search our memories for dangerous animals or a news

article about a death on the trail. We might imagine snakes or mountain lions or bears ahead. Furthermore, knowing how well we prepared for the hike, we might come to the belief that we can handle whatever threat is ahead. Thus, while our brains and bodies may be prepared to move utilizing a fear-based set of behaviors, our unique interpretive capacities might inhibit or suppress some of the behaviors in order to continue down a particular path. In other instances, an interpretation of the faces we see running past us might engender such a fear-response in us that we don't bother to continue but just turn tail and run.

Proposition 4. Human beings share a pervasive relationship with God. This relationship is predicated on the human possibility of co-determination and the sense that God lives passionately and persuasively with us in the world. This means that the future is open and the possibilities of continued or renewed hope are available to us.

So far, I have couched human beings as actors in the world who perceive things individually but live completely within the bounds of an interrelated existence. Many of our interpretations of the world are derived from the sensory data we accumulate through a variety of experiences. However, as a person of faith I also believe we interpret the world using non-sensory data as well. Our interpretive schemas are impacted by notions of beauty and ethics which are not totally derived from sensory data. I would say that we are likewise impacted by notions of faith and the perception of a higher ground of being outside what we alone can experience through sensory data.

Throughout millennia people have sought to characterize what they have perceived outside of the sensory data they collect during experiences. While we may never know the complete truth of these moments of clarity regarding a higher ground of being, it does not stop us from developing systems of thought to explore what it is we believe we have encountered. For Christians, this system of thought developed into notions of God as often seen through various portrayals of the life of Jesus of Nazareth and believed to be felt through the interaction of the Holy Spirit. There has always been space within the Christian tradition for intimacy and distance, immanence and transcendence. What has often proven to be a source of concern is the manner in which the divine-human relationship has been conceived. Realizing that any attempt to construct a notion of this relationship will inevitably be incomplete, it is imperative that we utilize the tools at our disposal to venture plausible affirmations. To be a theological human being is to understand ourselves as part of a divine-human interrelationality which at least impacts human beings and in certain systems impacts both God and humanity.

To that end, I have utilized process theology to elucidate the divine-human relationship. The central ideas I have highlighted include many notions, not the least of which are co-determination and God's persuasive power. These two ideas about the divine-human relationship create the possibility of an open future whereby God is recognized as offering the best possible aims for a situation, but allows human beings to be responsible actors in the world attempting to hear and respond according to these aims. Given the incomplete ways in which we understand the ways God works in our lives, human beings enact portions of the possibilities God offers, subjectively aiming

themselves in a direction. Thus, for a particular experience human self-determination requires a flexible God who can adapt new initial aims on a moment by moment basis given the perfect knowledge God has of the best possible ways in which beauty can be increased in the world. Following process theology, I understand that God must be intimately aware of a particular situation and its impact on both the human actors and the greater world. Furthermore, through this awareness God should be affected by the experience in such a way that God can empathically sense what a human actor is experiencing and continue to maintain and adapt initial aims as the subject directs itself. Process theologian Thompson stated that God offers “the best possibilities for that entity's future based on that entity's accumulated past; God's offer— God's aim—will reflect that entity's ‘given’ situation but God's aim will also transcend that ‘given,’ because God seeks the best for all in all moments (2005, p. 22). It is my estimation that God’s love is such that God continues to provide the best possible aims for our moment to moment experiences regardless of the previous choices we make.

Through this understanding of God, I see our futures as open-ended and thus the possibility of hope, of anticipated attainable possibilities, is present regardless of circumstance. That is, through this line of thinking the very presence of a loving God, regardless of how far off our subjective aims take us from God’s initial aims, is cause for hope. Indeed, there are some circumstances in which our hopes are revealed more plainly than others. Yet, the life of a theological being should make room for the presence of real hope regardless of the trauma or tragic circumstances that may befall them.

Proposition 5. Human beings are emotional creatures. Neuropsychology affirms the embedded nature of emotions in our physical lives. Our emotions contribute significantly to our experiences and the habits that form our selves, and influence our relationships and imaginative possibilities. Our emotional experiences tend to form lasting and intense memories which can be recalled with greater ease. Just as psychology affirms the embodied nature of our emotional lives, so too should our theology. As theological creatures embedded in relational systems, emotions can be understood as adaptive and not inherently life limiting; moreover, they should be understood as contributing a measure of passion, direction and possibility to the reciprocal interactions in the divine-human relationship.

We are emotional creatures. Through the particular ways our brains have evolved over time we can experience a plethora of emotions related to particular experiences. Much like trying to imagine a square circle, it is nearly impossible to conceive of an emotionless person. In Chapter Three, I explored some of the emotional centers of the human brain, looking at fear in particular. In Chapter Four, I explored the role memory plays in our subjectivity and how emotions impact the intensity and recall of particular experiences. Simply stated, we live emotional lives. They color our perceptions of new experiences and may direct our passions towards particular objects or experiences. The ability to experience emotions is a part of our physiological make-up. Emotions inhabit our social experiences and interpretive life. They add layers of meaning to our experiences and can be shared across relationships. Thompson (2005) added that “Emotions are an important part of human experience and thus are also valued. They are

not to be ignored, stifled, minimized, or berated; humans need them to fulfill their humanity” (p. 28). Just as our embodied emotional life helps shape our experiences and memories, the importance of this emotional life should not be lost in our theological formulations.

It is almost unthinkable to develop a theological anthropology without considering the role emotions have on the divine-human relationship. We are physical beings; we are social beings; we are interpretive beings; and, we are intimately tied to the divine in each moment of our existence. While I won't go so far as to say we ignore emotions when developing our sense of who human beings are and how they interact with God, I will say that emotions are often thought of as secondary to thought and maybe even tertiary after action. If nothing else is clear from this dissertation, we should be clear that each of these—emotion, thought, relationships, and action—plays a significant role in the development of habits which give rise to the self. Furthermore, they each play equally important roles in the divine-human relationship. For so long Christian theology has viewed God as a passionless entity, incapable of complex emotional reactions. With its roots in Greek culture, the impassability of God has been passed down through the ages in order to remind us of God's unchanging presence among us. The impassable God is one that cannot be affected by affect (Thompson, 2005, pp 19-20).

The process notion of God challenges these assumptions through God's dipolarity. In this view, God is both transcendent and involved in the world in meaningful ways. Through this understanding, emotions become serious grist for the theological mill.

When referring to the possibility of ascribing an emotional lens to God, Thompson points to ideas about God's suffering. He stated that,

If God suffers, and particularly if God suffers on account of the world, then we humans are reassured of God's care, which provokes feelings of assurance. Furthermore, as creatures made in God's image... humans can also be reassured that, as God suffers, suffering will sometimes be our experience, and we can manage it with God's ever-present offerings of help... Whitehead writes, "God is the great companion—the fellow-sufferer who understands" (Whitehead, 1978, p 351). (2005, p. 25)

Ultimately, this formulation of God leads to a reciprocity that goes well beyond actions we take in the world. God doesn't just hang around to witness our obedience. Instead, through a process understanding we find God intimately concerned with our lives and the experiences that develop them. When we experience joy, fear, anger, etc., God is present with a corresponding emotional state which reveals God's passion and compassion for each of God's creatures. Returning to Thompson, he characterized this emotional reciprocity, stating that

God feels the world's feelings just like our entire body feels a sensation coming from only one spot. God is "internally affected" by all the world's activity: "God laughs with us, cries with us, loves with us, feels pain when we do, enjoys satisfaction with us" (Goggin, 1995, p. 128). Just as humans can experience periods of durable happiness in spite of episodes of illness, stress, etc... so God can respond to the world's challenges yet remain "everlastingly, essentially happy" (Shields, 1992, p. 57). (2005, pp. 26-27)

The effect of utilizing a process framework to understand God and the divine-human relationship is far-reaching. The divine-human connection moves beyond mere devotion for a greater entity, to a relationship with an entity in which there is a mutuality of concern. A God who feels can provide a meaningful milieu through which human beings can experience the emotional tribulations of the world, but at the same time feel how God is present with them in a variety of circumstances. To call God emotional does not, in any

way, diminish the creative capacities of the Creator. Instead, it adds another layer to the complexities through which we can see God operate meaningfully in the world to affect lives.

Emotions, in psychological language, are often characterized under the labels of positive and negative without much further qualification as to the value these descriptors hold. Love is often seen as an example of a positive emotion while fear is characterized as a negative emotion. Regardless of the intent in utilizing these labels, they have an impact on perceptions related to these emotions. Thus, while describing an emotion as positive may ultimately signify a desire to include (and conversely a negative emotion as a desire to exclude) even these descriptors carry with them value judgments which color perceptions about the meaning of a particular emotional state. From a western cultural perspective, it is often thought that to admit fear is to admit weakness. On the other hand, to exhibit love is associated with risk and strength to endure hardships for the value of another. However, to characterize these emotions as such is to limit their ability to impact and shape our lives in meaningful ways. At times, love has been characterized as a weakness and inability to exhibit strength when needed. Yet fear rarely gets the same treatment. Fear, as I have characterized it, is an adaptive emotional response to a perceived threat. I would submit that to act out of fear is not to show weakness but instead to allow a normal adaptive human response to shape our interaction with an object perceived as a threat. In my estimation, fear is as much an attempt to exclude a threat from life as it is an attempt to include a variety of possibilities for human becoming in subsequent moments. Thus, any emotion carries with it the possibility of being

adaptive or maladaptive in our relational life. Thus, for me, it is unhelpful to consider emotions as positive or negative, despite the intent of using of such labels. They must instead be discussed as inherently neutral with the possibility that any emotion can result in adaptive and maladaptive responses to experiences.

A Pastoral Theology of Fear and Hope

Earlier, I described pastoral theology as the discipline whereby pastoral experiences and observations are brought into conversation with theological and cognate secular resources, providing a context for critical reflection in order to develop new theological and psychological resources for pastoral practice. This dissertation has relied on pastoral observations derived from personal experiences as a therapist. To that end, the pastoral theological sources for the genesis of this dissertation are more global theoretical than related to particular practices. To this point, I have provided five propositions related to how I understand human beings and the role of emotions in any theologically grounded construction of anthropology. These five propositions provide the context for critical reflection on fear and its relationship to hope. In this section I intend to examine the relationship between fear and hope more specifically. Propositions six through twelve develop an argument related to the meaning of fear and its relationship to hope. Through my theological interpretation of the emotions of fear and hope, two implications arise. The first is that there is an undercurrent or subtext of hope present in the genesis of the emotion of fear. The second implication refers back to Chapter Two and the understanding that hope is the antidote to fear. This section will draw out the first

implication of the relationship between fear and hope and introduce the second implication which will be developed in the final three propositions.

Proposition 6. The emotion of fear is an inescapable part of human life. Fear is an intense emotion related to a real or imagined threat, leading a person to enact a particular set of behaviors. The purpose of fear in animals is to provide the impetus to survive and cope with a threatening object. For human beings, that purpose is further elucidated in the imaginative desire to thrive in the world.

Fear is a basic emotional capacity found in a variety of animal species. The basic structures which produce fear, the amygdala and its connections in the brain, have been conserved throughout our genetic evolutionary history. Thus, there is no such thing as a fearless person, barring damage to particular regions of the brain. As a ubiquitously experienced emotion, fear is an adaptive response which orients a creature towards survival in the face of a threat. This orientation towards survival requires that a creature develop a variety of coping behaviors which are enacted in the midst of a threat and complete the impetus for survival. The behaviors associated with fearful states are also thought to be widely conserved across the boundaries of species. Generally speaking, when encountering a threat a creature will rely on one of four behaviors in order to cope with what they are experiencing. These behaviors include: flight, fight, freeze and appease. As coping strategies each of these behaviors are intended to provide relief from the reality of a present threat.

Human beings, while utilizing these behaviors, have unique capacities related to memories, beliefs and imagination which inform their relationship to the objects they find

threatening. Human beings possess the capacity to make meaningful judgments about their experiences which add a layer of complexity to their responses. Thus, for human beings these behaviors are not just rote responses to threatening experiences. They also include some measure of meaning and imagination related to how they are carried in a particular circumstance. Thus, while a normal creature might literally enact one of these behaviors, a human being might take these behaviors to a different level. Instead of literally running from a threat they might just as soon withdraw mentally from a threat as they would physically. The capacity to imagine multiple possible scenarios in which one protects his or herself from a threat creates unique possibilities for human interactions with their environments.

Proposition 7. The neurological capacities and plasticity of the human brain creates a unique situation in human beings related to memory and imagination. Our lives are comprised of the remembered stories we enact and tell, as well as the attainable hopes we project into the future. Not only can human beings form habits which direct their lives, but they can also re-form their habits and re-author the stories that they might feel bind them to particular lives. This enables human beings to live as though they are still becoming and moving into an open future.

To be sure, there are fixed structures within the brain which handle particular functions. At the same time, the novel ways in which a particular human being experiences the world ensures that unique and novel constructions of experience will abound. Human memory is fascinating in that it allows us to both remember and forget details of our experiences. As we narrate our lives, themes emerge which form habits that

construct our selves. As we remember (and forget) the various stories of our lives our self changes; we constantly become someone new in each moment of our lives. This means that while we might feel the same or act under the direction of specific habits, the self we enact in a particular moment is affected by each new experience we have. We reflect, mull over, ruminate and/or react to our experiences which make it difficult to posit some kind of perfect image of the self which exists apart from our interactivity in the world.

As we interact with our experiences, habits form which inform our beliefs and enable us to make interpretive risks about particular situations. These habits and beliefs form a core set of activities which come to the forefront when a particular situation calls for a particular act on our part. Thus, while each situation we encounter is novel, the beliefs we have developed over time enable us to make interpretive risks about situations that call to mind specific habits of the self we want to enact. Yet, even in these moments when long held habits are enacted, our interpretation and activity are nothing more than possibilities. This is due to our imaginations which are coupled with these habits. Thus, while we may have some strong habits related to particular types of experiences, we always have within us the possibility of imagining and enacting a novel set of behaviors, thoughts or emotions in response to a situation. Furthermore, we have the opportunity to envision novel responses related to particular types of experiences by bringing our imaginative capacities to bear on a particular experience.

Although human beings share similar brain structures, the outcomes of their interpretations are unique. Thus, while God may have knitted us together in our mother's womb using the same thread (New Revised Standard Version, Psalm 139:13), the

tapestry that continues to be woven differs from person to person based on how their experiences shaped their interpretive frames. Even while the basic structures of the brain remain fixed, the ways in which our neurons connect change over times with the use of different parts of the brain. Our brains work in dynamic ways despite the relative fixed structures within them. Taking a process view of this means that we see how evolutionary history has shaped our brain structures over time. This shaping process allows the brain to react to the environment, interpret the intentions of relational objects, create and form lasting memories and/or act emotionally and rationally. While the structures are in place for this short list of activities, the manner in which they come together is novel for each person. The unique neural pathways formed by each individual, for memory especially, provides the past that informs our current interpretive framework. As these past moments flow together in the present, I would surmise that God is present, providing a persuasive set of possibilities for the next moments of life.

The reformation or re-authoring of the self during novel experiences compliments a process theological view of the self and the possibilities of a truly open future. For process theologians, our past experiences (memories, beliefs, habits, actions, etc.) flow together in a particular moment, leading to particular possibilities for novelty. In order to act upon God's persuasive possibilities, human beings must be able to imagine the possibilities that God shares with them apart from particular habits they cultivate throughout their lives. While I am sure that some of the habits human beings cultivate aid our understanding of what God seeks to persuade us in to doing, we must also be aware of the way in which God lures us toward novel methods of cultivating beauty in the

world. The active power and presence of God relative to an open future, based on the totality of remembered experiences in a given moment, is not just a theological quandary to ponder. It is a practical imperative necessitated by the ability of human beings to change, adapt and grow in the midst of their experiences of the world. The manner in which we construct and imagine the possibilities of the world with God's help requires our openness to the possibilities of God's persuasions, as well as openness to the possibility that something (someone) new can be created within the structure of our being to enact these possibilities.

Given the accumulated past of a particular human being, it is my contention that God provides and persuades us to enact the best possible outcome for each experience we enter given the circumstances that brought us into a particular moment. The reality of human sinfulness is that at times our actions based on God's persuasions are pale reflections of the possibilities we have been given. At the same time, the immanence of a process view of God allows us to remember God's eternal presence with us despite what happens in our attempts to relate to the world around us. Our faith as Christians, from a process perspective, is inextricably tied to the hope of God's continued presence and prodding regardless of where we find ourselves in life. Moreover, through that hope in God's immanence we can understand that whatever we experience in a present moment is not the end of our becoming.

Proposition 8. Given the imaginative possibilities and the notion of an open future, the behaviors human beings enact related to fear—fright, flight, freeze and appease—point to the desire to live out a future. They point to a hope that we might

live another day. In this regard, fear is a vehicle through which our hopes can be drawn out and/or revealed.

In Chapter Three, I spent some time discussing the behaviors we associate with the emotion of fear. Fight, flight, freeze and appease are the four most common behaviors seen when someone appears afraid. In most creatures these are more or less automatic reactions based upon a variety of factors experienced when encountering a threat. That is, depending on the severity, distance and sensory appraisal of the threat, a different behavior will be enacted to take in each of these factors in order to relieve one from the presence of the threat. At their most basic level, each of these behaviors might be conceived as taking us from the presence of a threat. Another way of stating this is that the behaviors are protective. They provide an immediate set of reactions which protect our life *from* a perceived threat. At the same time, these behaviors not only protect us *from* a threat, but they also protect us *for* continued life.

Therefore, a second meaning we can contrive from these fear-based behaviors is that they somehow protect our future in the face of a threat. In this case, the behaviors enacted related to threats push us towards something rather than only taking us away from a particular threat. The question for behaviorists, research psychologists and others most often relates to *what* is happening in a particular moment when the emotion of fear is present. For theologians and others who posit that the life we lead is also rife with meaning, we must also ponder *why* a particular set of activities is enacted in particular situations. That is, not only is it important to understand what happens when we become

afraid, but it is also important to realize why we bother with particular actions when the emotion of fear is felt.

Proposition 9. The purpose of fear may be revealed in its actions, yet the meaning of fear is ultimately revealed in the divine-human relationship. The world is an interrelated whole in which objects sometimes collide and produce situations of threat and trauma. In process theology, it is thought that the world evolved through the persuasive power of God and that God continues to be intimately active with this world. Fear, interpreted as a manifestation of God's love and persuasive power, may also be interpreted as a manifestation of God's hope and initial aims in particular situations.

Before returning to a more specific analysis of the relationship between fear and hope I want to turn to look at the overall purpose of the emotion of fear in the lives of human beings. Here, I want to take a broader theological view of the emotion of fear and its inescapability. Continuing with the assumptions of process theologians that God intends the best for each moment given the cumulative past that comes together in a particular moment means that fear cannot be seen as a "bad" emotion. Thus, at varying points in our life the emotion of fear serves not only an adaptive purpose towards our environments but also serves to function as the best option that God can offer us in a particular moment. At these times, experiencing fear can be a vital part of the active manner in which God interacts with human beings for the purpose of increasing beauty rather than discord.

When a threat is so pervasive that it contains the possibility that some part of the self (physical, mental or spiritual) may be annihilated, then the best possible emotion and activity during that experience would encompass some protective stance. Thus, we might hypothesize that God can utilize the emotion of fear and its corporeal manifestations as a protective emotion in order to bring about the best possible future in a given circumstance. In this way, the emotion of fear is not only adaptive but also a useful emotional state through which we derive benefits that would otherwise not be available if we ignored or suppressed the emotion. Theologically speaking, we can surmise that the emotion of fear is a beneficial emotion which can be conveyed effectively through the divine-human relationship in order to provide beneficial interactions with the world. Sometimes, the best way to relate to particular elements of the world is to avoid interacting with those elements because of their potential for evil (understood as discord and triviality of experience). That is, the emotion of fear utilized through the divine-human milieu may very well compel us to forgo a particular relationship in order to maintain the possibility of future interactions which benefit ourselves and the world.

Accepting the theological ramifications of the emotion of fear means rethinking how we talk about fear in both pastoral clinical settings (i.e.- pastoral psychotherapy, hospice and hospitals) and pastoral settings in general (pastoral care, worship and education settings). It requires that we look not only at the presenting issue which gives rise to the emotion, but also beyond the present circumstance in order to take a longer view on its impact in our lives. Just as a process concept of God allows us to conceive of God as providing initial aims which include activities related to experiencing the emotion

of fear, it would also surmise that *our fear is equally revealing of God's hope for our future and the relational possibilities contained in each subsequent moment.*

Finally, if fear and hope are anticipatory emotions as discussed in Chapter Five, then they have present components which point to future possibilities. In this way, they share a meaningful genesis in the circumstances of the present and both point us towards possible outcomes.³⁸ Thusly, both fear and hope are intimately related to the ways in which we narrate our lives. Each emotional state is affected by the details we chose to incorporate into our stories; they are impacted by the prior experiences we have had and the intensity of these events. If we look to God as being a loving entity whose hope for the world is tied to persuading the world into greater harmony and beauty, then I surmise that the emotion of fear is initiated by the hope present in the divine-human relationship. That is, we become afraid simply because we hope and are able to connect to a meaningful hopeful future story. Together, fear and hope are partnered emotions which serve to direct us toward survival and fulfillment.

Proposition 10. Thus, to be afraid is to realize that we are a part of an interrelated structure of life. When we are afraid we not only realize a threat or recognize a traumatic event, we also act according to a latent hope that reveals the possibilities of life for us. The full meaning of our fear should encompass not only the behaviors that help us survive a threat or trauma, but also an awareness of the hopes that make our behaviors relevant. We cannot be afraid without also being hopeful that something in our lives is worth living for.

We must begin to see fear as more than just physiological responses, conditioned reactions and neurological capacities. It should be understood as much more complex than just a set of biochemical reactions. Fear, threats, trauma and hope are heavy laden with the meanings we ascribe to them. Emotional states give legs to the passions of our lives orienting us to important objects and experiences in our environments. Fear is meaningful to our lives in and of itself, that it also concurrently reveals hopes we anticipate attaining adds another layer to any interpretation we might desire to give it. To be afraid is to acknowledge that we imagine, that we project into the future a time when our hopes may be attained. To be afraid is to realize the fundamental interrelatedness of the world, as well as the fragility and possibilities of those relationships.

Fear points us to a future; it is a reaction to an object which poses a threat to some component(s) of the self, be it physical, mental, emotional and/or spiritual. For us to even ponder the ramifications of losing that component(s), we must also have some imaginative conception of a life that continues with the same component(s) intact. That is, *running concurrently with the emotion of fear is an undercurrent of hope which provides a latent sense of a future in which we continue to thrive.*

When we are afraid our bodies enter a particular state of action revealed through a number of behaviors which seek to remove the impact of a threat. The central theological question related to these behaviors is why? Why bother to act to preserve our lives? The most meaningful reply to these inquiries is simply because we have the capacity to hope. Furthermore, this capacity for hope is readily present as *a part* of the emotion of fear. As the emotion of fear rises in the face of a threat, the body reacts protectively in order to

prepare us to survive a threat. We are appropriately focused on the possibilities for continued life beyond the encounter with a particular threat. Once the emotion has abated given the appropriate time, the manner in which we narrate the harrowing experience is ripe for this infusion of hope. That is, the story is not only about the impact of the threat, but an appropriately thickened story will also include the perspective that the threat has revealed some greater concern or hope which has quickened us to act as though our life were worthy of continuing. Through a process understanding of the divine-human relationship, counselors and caregivers can offer an honest intertwining of fear and hope that both reveals it as a subtext to the emotion of fear as well as part of an antidote to the traumas and threats that continue to haunt lives far beyond the event that sparked us to be afraid.

Proposition 11. There are times when we experience the emotion of fear which run outside the bounds of its intended purposes. The memory and imaginations of human beings can run amuck as they incorporate real and possible threats into narratives which inform the ways they choose to relate to the world. In these moments, it is easy to lose the hopeful possibilities of the initial aims of God in favor of coping with the world through a hyper-aroused sense of survival.

Due to the strong emotional toll that the emotion of fear takes on our memories, sometimes the threats and traumas we experience linger in our memories and activate our imaginations longer than they should. As we saw in Chapters Three and Four, the emotion of fear can prejudice our memories by making them stronger, last longer and easier to recall. Thus, the more intense the experience, the longer the memory will sustain

itself and the easier it will be recalled in seemingly similar circumstances. This impacts our ability to imagine creative and novel potentialities during new experiences. As I mentioned in Chapter Four, our imaginations are uniquely formed by our experiences and memories. The imaginative constructions we endeavor to create are found in our ability to creatively repurpose memories in order to view, act, think and/or emote in news relative to the previous ways we have related to the world.

Fear, as I have explained, is an intense and adaptive emotional state relative to the presence of a threat. The emotion of fear reveals in us a will towards survival, coping and thriving in the face of that threat. However, like most things we experience, when experiences/threats/traumas impact our constructed world in manners that reach beyond our perceived ability to cope, maladaptive coping strategies can form. Thusly, there may arise times when our will to survival is stronger than our ability to turn off the emotion of fear, resulting in an increased sense of threat in the world. This increased sense of threat can color our perceptions of others and of novel experiences such that we break off relational possibilities before even knowing what will come of an event.

I think that these possible maladaptive behaviors are evident when thinking about the culture of fear discussed in Chapter Two. In this culture of fear, threats are more widely disseminated through an ever present media and non-stop reporting of global trauma. At times it seems as though the threats and traumas of the globe are as inescapable as the fears they engender. In 2010, it is difficult to escape the constant reporting of tragedies, traumatic experiences and a variety of perceived threats. This places us in a precarious position of having to deal almost constantly with both perceived

threats and the actual threats that appear in our daily experiences. If God's initial aims for us include a greater sense of relationality that sparks a more creative and beautiful world, then it becomes increasingly difficult to be persuaded by these aims when the constant reporting of one's neighbor as threat overshadows any aim we might receive. The problem of maladaptive fear is not just a psychological one; it is a theological problem as well.

Proposition 12. In light of these moments when hyper-arousal and hyper-vigilance prevail, it is important for pastoral caregivers and pastoral counselors to be able to point to the hopeful possibilities endemic to the emotion of fear. Pastoral caregivers/counselors should place the emotion of fear in the context of a meaningful divine-human relationship utilizing knowledge gained from a variety disciplines. The main themes that pastoral caregivers/counselors can point to are surviving, coping and thriving.

Pastoral caregivers and counselors have at their disposal a variety of psychological and theological worldviews and tools which allow them to approach issues from a thicker perspective than someone just utilizing one worldview or the other. Helping someone understand the psycho-physiology of fear is one step in helping someone come to an understanding of what happens when they experience a threat. It normalizes the response we experience with the emotion of fear in order to provide relief from cultural messages of shame associated with being afraid. Through both neurophysiological and behavioral education people can come to understand the automaticity of their responses and their sometimes overwhelming activities. Knowledge

concerning the individual ways we construct and narrate the world enables people to engage in responsible thinking about the memories of their experiences. Finally, pastoral caregivers and counselors provide a tentative theological grounding point through which people can begin to explore the meaning their fearful experiences and thicken that story with the undergirded hope expressed through it. I find process theology to be the most compelling theological system for this kind of transformative work with the emotion of fear. By grounding my work with the emotion of fear in the meaning system associated with process theology I am able to develop the themes of surviving, coping and thriving as the most appropriate for pastoral caregivers and counselors who are working with people who have experienced and continue to experience prominent visions of threats and traumas in their lives.

Surviving, Coping and Thriving

The final three propositions espoused in this chapter have been developed out of the framework provided in the first four chapters of this work. The ultimate goal of this project is to provide useful pastoral possibilities based on sound critical reflection of the relationship between theological and secular cognate resources. Through these three themes I propose a way in which we can re-imagine our relationships to threats and traumas which speak both to their serious impact on our lives as well as the possibilities contained in their implicit hopes and the presence of a loving God throughout our experiences.

Proposition 13. The primary goal of any encounter with a threat or trauma is the survival of the physical and mental self. Utilizing neurological data and an

understanding of fear behaviors, pastoral caregivers and counselors can normalize both behaviors and thoughts related to threats and trauma. Empathy with the narrative borne by a fear-bearing person is of utmost importance as it allows the person to re-connect to an interrelational world they may have come to distrust. The desire to survive is normal; to remain in survival mode presents a state of being in relationship to the world which can prevent us from developing an awareness of God's continued prodding towards the possibilities of novel future moments.

Our initial reaction to the threats and traumas we experience is most often the emotion of fear. As a result, we seek a prudent way in which to survive whatever it is we encounter. The maintenance of a physical and/or mental presence in the world is the thrust of this survival. However, a lack of cultural empathy for and awareness of the necessity of the emotion of fear often keeps people from understanding its inescapability and its adaptive capacities for continued human life.

In order to take serious the accounts of fear experienced through threat or trauma I propose placing the reaction experienced in the context of human life and physiology. We do not have to be neuropsychologists to realize the importance of placing the emotion of fear within a neurological context in order to understand its pervasiveness. Helping people understand that what they experience—thoughts, emotions and behaviors—have their roots in specific neural capacities built into their physiological systems in order to increase the likelihood of survival is a noble goal. It is also the first step in thickening a narrative around trauma and/or threats. The desire for survival is a normal part of human existence experienced through the emotion of fear. To teach a person that fear is a normal

adaptive, even positive, emotion is to provide them with new avenues for exploring its meaning in psychological and theological dimensions.

Furthermore, survival in the face of threats and/or trauma, theologically speaking, points to a continued hope found in the divine-human relationship expressed through human evolution and God's continued support and presence in our lives. I believe in God's continued presence throughout human history and development. As a process theologian, my notion of God allows for God's hand to be present as we evolved to our current state of being in the world. Thus, for me, it is not an accident of nature that the neurological mechanisms which guide and provide for our survival have been conserved in our historical development. The ability to be afraid is just one way in which God's immanence is felt in our lives. Furthermore, it is a testament to God's compassionate care that there are inherited mechanisms which allow us to preserve our lives in a sometimes hostile and unpredictable world.

Proposition 14. In the context of human activity, the meaning of the emotion of fear is more complex than offering an opportunity for survival. The emotion of fear also points to the ways in which humans seek to cope with threats. To that end, there are two ways in which we cope with threats and/or traumas. These coping strategies are found in the initial behaviors, as well as the imaginative moments of reflection following a fearful experience. Upon reflecting on a threat or trauma, the next step for a fear-bearing person is to develop methods of coping with the memory and imaginative ruminations about that experience. The use of meditative techniques, cognitive tools and spiritual/religious practices can help a person

develop a sense of calm as they tell and re-tell their narrative. In these moments of coping, the pastoral caregiver/counselor can provide a gentle prodding to help a person re-author their narratives and thicken their lives.

The initial way we cope with trauma and/or threat is through the four primary behaviors associated with the emotion. While these behaviors are present in order to help ensure our survival they also propose unique activities we engage in order to cope with the reality of our felt impending demise. Flight, fight, freeze and appease are all methods of coping with the threat in front of us. They are the strategies we engage in order to ensure our survival. Again, education about the normal bodily responses to threats and trauma presents an opportunity to enable someone to develop a different relationship with their reactions.

Most often, caregivers and counselors see a person after the fearful event they have experienced. Coping in this case can begin to take on a proactive role in helping someone re-author their fearful narratives. In these instances, persons most often arrive with the intention of “dealing with” whatever trauma or threat they have experienced. Whether by force or fortune, people come with the expectation that they will be able to develop novel ways of relating to their traumatic narratives so that whatever residual effects of the experience they have can be mitigated. Most often this means providing the safe and empathic space where a person can tell and re-tell their stories as they seek new perspectives on it.

At this point in time coping takes on a different meaning and role in the life of a person. Here, we move beyond education to a proactive set of tools to help someone

maintain a sense of safety in the midst of reliving their traumatic experiences. It is important that caregivers and counselors take the traumatic and threatening experiences of another person seriously. We all respond to various situations differently. Our unique experiences, memories and imaginative possibilities allow us to create different meanings out of similar experiences. The ability to move flexibly within the framework of a particular story hinges on our ability to feel comfortable taking apart the narrative and putting it back together in novel ways with new information and perspectives. There are a variety of methods, tools and techniques that we can utilize to help someone create the space through which novelty can be welcomed. We can help ourselves as caregivers and counselors by paying attention to the resources a person brings with them and augmenting them as needed according to the interests and talents of a person. Just as we seek to help a person place their experience in a larger context, we should also seek to help them develop the coping skills to do this on their own when the time arises.

Proposition 15. Due to the pervasiveness of human imagination, as witnessed to in the novelty found through divine-human interactivity, the emotion of fear is related to the human capacity for hope. Furthermore, the relationship between fear and hope reveals a human desire for flourishing despite sometimes overwhelming past experiences. When re-authoring a fear-bearing narrative we should bear in mind the relationship between fear and hope. That is, as a person re-authors a threatening or traumatic narrative, a primary goal is to reconnect them to the hope that enabled their action for survival and their desire to cope with the event. Furthermore, by theologically grounding the emotion of fear we place it within the

purview of a meaning system. In process theology that system states that God offers an initial aim for each circumstance which reveals the most beneficial choice for the person and the world. I take this to mean that the initial aims of an event seek to provide a milieu through which human beings can thrive in the world. The possibility for thriving in any given moment does not abate with the emotion of fear. The hope to thrive is, in fact, endemic in any moment we experience the emotion of fear.

Education about our survival capacities and initial coping skills are important beginnings. Proactive utilization of the resources of the person and new coping and meditative practices that enable the person to find safe places are promising beginnings to re-authoring fearful narratives. Ultimately, the threats and traumas we experience need to be placed within the context of a life-giving meaning system which enables the person to fully incorporate a newly thickened narrative into the larger structure of their lives.

This process of incorporation is not something to take lightly. Indeed, it may be that the suffering someone feels relative to their trauma may mean that this is a lifelong process. The change we experience is often incremental and the memories of the past, especially those bound to the emotion of fear, are not so easily forgotten. To thrive is not to forget a trauma or its impact; instead, it is to associate novel perspectives related to the undercurrent of hope with the experience in order to provide a different interpretive frame. To do this, the hopes that a person has identified as their reasons for engaging in a process of surviving and coping must be incorporated into the larger narrative they have constructed. That is, they must move beyond seeing themselves as only victims of a

threat or trauma. They must also accept that they were active participants in the experience, utilizing their strengths in small ways to resist the impact of the trauma. As counternarratives are brought into conversation with the trauma, a person's values and hopes are juxtaposed with the narrative they have formed about themselves. While this is not a panacea for the impact of a trauma, it is the beginning steps of realizing that the traumatic experience is comprised of more complex meanings and possibilities. The hope of the pastoral counselor and caregiver is that the thickened narrative constructed in these moments will provide the impetus to thrive, based on their hopes, as both a result of and in spite of the fearful experience they bear.

As a theological project, one of the main sources for these counternarratives of hope, strength, resistance and resilience can be found in the divine-human relationship. By helping someone place the trauma within a complex framework of faith, neurology and subjectivity new sources of life-giving knowledge are shared and acted upon. A threat and/or trauma is but one experience in a vast and complex narrative life. To be sure, these narratives have great enduring power and shape our perspectives on the lives we lead. At the same time, placing them within the contexts of the hopes that are borne with them allows us to remember the life-giving activity present in the divine-human relationship and the hopes that God has for us. As the author of Jeremiah states, "For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope" (New Revised Standard Version, Jer. 29:11). For the process God of the moment, fear and hope can meet in the inevitable ways that God persuades us to interact with the world. To believe in God's perfect knowledge of past

and present allows us to see God's activity as a faithful plan for the hope of humankind despite the tragic circumstances that befall the world. As counselors and caregivers, an awareness of the hope that undergirds the emotion of fear can help benefit those we encounter who live in hyper-vigilant states to see the full possibilities of their experiences as well as the full possibilities of the divine-human relationship.

Conclusion

A pastoral theological interpretation of the emotion of fear necessitates the inclusion of the role hope the genesis of fear and in a quest for survival in the face of threats and/or trauma. The evidence of the inescapability of the emotion of fear requires theologians take it seriously as not only an emotional state but also an important connection in the divine-human relationship. Seeing fear through a process theological lens allows us to interpret it as an adaptable normal human response. Furthermore, seeing fear theologically allows us to develop its meaning as a normal human function. That meaning is found in the relationship between hope and fear, and how fear is undergirded by a fundamental hope in human beings. The divine-human relationship is necessarily emotional in that emotions provide the passion for activity. Thus, there are times when fear is part of the initial aims from God for a particular experience. The hope being that removal from one relationship allows for more diverse possibilities for interrelatedness. For those engaged in practical pastoral work, surviving, coping and thriving provide three themes through which we can explore the meaning of fear and thicken the narratives of those who have experienced threats and/or traumas.

Chapter Seven: The Emotion of Fear in the Clinic

This final chapter develops a neuro-hermeneutical approach to dealing with trauma in a therapeutic setting. Up to this point I have put forth the following arguments. The emotion of fear is adaptive and inescapable. It helps us recognize and react appropriately to threatening and/or traumatic objects in our midst. Our reactions to these experiences tend to be intense. They become associated with certain memories, allowing them to be recalled with ease and last longer. Bringing together theology and psychology allows us to create complex meanings concerning what it means to be afraid. The most important of these complex meanings is the undercurrent of hope which provides the impetus for activity in the face of a threat. When conceived theologically, our ability to express the emotion of fear runs concurrently with our ability to imagine hopeful possibilities. Thus, theologically speaking, just as fear is inescapable, so too is human hope. These two emotions are so intertwined that one assumes if not requires the other.

However, there are times when the emotion of fear is overwhelming. This leads to residual effects based on our memory of an emotional state that is tied to threats and/or traumas. Thus, the threat we perceive has a discordant affect on our ability to interpret the world. Furthermore, it may limit the scope of hope in a given circumstance. At these times, the hyper-vigilance and hyper-arousal associated with the emotion of fear become dominant methods of interpreting events in the world around us. This inhibits our ability

to relate to the world in meaningful ways by engaging in relationships that increase the beauty and harmony of the world.

The continued development of my thesis concerning the emotion of fear hinges on its applicability to pastoral settings, one of which is pastoral counseling. This chapter relates the theory and theology of fear developed in this dissertation to a clinical setting. In western psychological settings, there are several diagnostic labels which relate to the emotion of fear. These labels include phobias and panic-oriented diagnostic categories, as well as Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Each of these diagnoses carries with them social, cultural, religious medical/clinical and political meanings. The main concern of the remainder of this chapter will examine the relationship between fear and trauma.

When someone brings a particular fear-bearing narrative with them to pastoral therapy, they are bringing the residual trauma experienced relating to a threat. The discourse they share reveals the impact of the threat on their lives and the subsequent narratives that ensue. As this chapter progresses I want to examine PTSD and trauma as separate concepts. In this case, PTSD reveals the behaviors and memories which permeate the life of someone who has experienced a traumatic event. Trauma is a broadly defined term that shares a number of meanings. In the most basic sense it refers to a traumatic experience. A more nuanced understanding of trauma sheds the modern for the postmodern by understanding trauma and its resultant states of being as more than diagnostic criteria. Trauma, in this instance, has to do with human subjectivity and interpretation. Following this development of trauma, I will present recent research that helps describe the neuro-hermeneutical framework I propose. Finally, this chapter ends

with a case study utilizing the themes of surviving, coping and thriving to help someone re-author fear-based traumatic narratives.

Trauma

There is significant enough difference between trauma and PTSD to warrant the inclusion of both in this final chapter. I begin this section by examining PTSD. The strength of PTSD is in the consistent criteria for its diagnosis. This provides a stable framework through which a variety of disciplines can develop and test hypotheses regarding its genesis and treatment. Trauma, as stated above, is a broadly defined category with a variety of referents. These referents include events, interpretations and practical therapeutic emphases. In this section I want to present information from PTSD and trauma literature. Two strands of PTSD literature help us understand its usefulness for this project. The first is found in the *DSM-IV-TR* and points to the criteria for diagnosing PTSD. The second is neuropsychological research examining the activity of the brain in persons diagnosed with PTSD. What is helpful about examining the term trauma is that it is more useful to the practice of narrative pastoral therapy. Utilizing a broader concept of trauma introduces subjectivity and meaning as a part of the intervention process. Rather than the narrow diagnostic criteria of PTSD, the client becomes the expert on what is traumatic rather than the therapist. Narrative understandings of trauma and the work done by the therapist and client can help us better fit trauma literature into the perspectives used in this dissertation.

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

PTSD is the most common name ascribed to the aftereffects of serious trauma in the United States. While the official diagnosis wasn't included until the third version of the *DSM*, the symptoms related to PTSD have long been observed. The inclusion of PTSD in the *DSM* has been a source of consternation for some people. There are those who decry its inclusion as the ultimate acquiescence to political and social pressures rather than the inclusion of a true medical diagnosis. Others claim that its symptoms can be ascribed to alternate disorders rendering the need for a specific designation unnecessary. It is notable that the vast majority of people who witness or experience traumatic stress do not develop PTSD (McNally, 2004, p. 1). At the same time, much like the *DSM* itself, utilizing the term PTSD can be a helpful tool. For instance, the diagnosis of PTSD encapsulates a variety of particular observations involving mannerisms which evolve in some people following a traumatic event.

These observations make up the diagnostic criteria for PTSD. These symptoms impair a person's functioning and persist for more than a month. They include: (1) witnessing, experiencing or confronting an event that threatens their or others' physical integrity and includes a reaction of intense fear, helplessness or horror; (2) experiencing the event persistently through their actions, memories, dreams or other physiological or psychological means; (3) avoiding or becoming numb to the stimuli associated with the trauma; and finally, (4) exhibiting increased arousal which exaggerates their responses to the world around them (APA, 2000, pp. 467-468). My conclusion is that a person suffering from PTSD exhibits symptoms related to a fear-based narrative which hampers

their ability to effectively relate to the world around them. Hyper-arousal and hyper-vigilance are hallmark reactions to the pervasive memories formed from a traumatic event. The unique defining characteristic of PTSD is that it requires a specific kind of event to occur in order for it to be diagnosed (McNally, 2004, p. 2).

The *DSM* states the following about PTSD:

The essential feature of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder is the development of characteristic symptoms following exposure to an extreme traumatic stressor involving direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one's physical integrity; or witnessing an event that involves death, injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of another person; or learning about unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by a family member or other close associate. (2000, p. 463)

If PTSD originates from the experience of an actual external event, then that means it is a fear-based reaction rather than an anxiety disorder. As stated earlier, one of the unique hallmarks of the emotion of fear was its relationship to a perceived tangible threat. That is, there is something specific that a person reacts to which gives rise to the emotion of fear; this suggests that PTSD is more closely aligned with diagnoses like phobias rather than generalized anxiety disorders.

PTSD as a Fear-Based Disorder.

Research on fear provides a unique view into the neurological dynamics which seem to be altered in the face of trauma. It is the arousal of the amygdala that seems to support PTSD as a fear activating diagnosis (Armony, Corbo, Clement, & Brunet, 2005; Francati, Vermetten, & Brenner, 2006; Yehuda & LeDoux, 2007). The research into the functions of the amygdala continues to be descriptive rather than predictive. As Yehuda and LeDoux remarked, "It is not known, at this point, whether a hyperactive amygdala

response to threats preexisted and predisposed the development of PTSD or whether it was a consequence of the disorder” (2007, p. 22).

From the literature connecting PTSD and neuropsychology, Francati, Vermetten, and Brenner (2006) found that “Alterations in the fear response mechanism are believed to lead to intrusive memories, autonomic hyperarousal, and flashbacks in many patients” (p. 203). The literature supports the idea that PTSD is a fear response that has adapted to a traumatic stressor in ways that hinder “normal” interpretations of the world. According to Francati, Vermetten, and Brenner, in persons with PTSD the normal adaptive fear response:

takes a different form, in which patients overgeneralize danger cues; therefore, they continuously perceive normally nonthreatening situations as dangerous... Cues linked to a traumatic memory, which normally do not elicit fearfulness, can become conditioned and there cause autonomic reactions and defensive behavior, even in nonthreatening situations. (2006, p. 203)

In order to effectively intervene with people who suffer from any disordered activity, correct identification of what ails is of the utmost importance. For the sake of assessment and treatment it becomes important to distinguish between fear and anxiety-based disorders.

Understanding PTSD as a disorder related to the emotion of fear rather than anxiety should give us pause to think about how we treat it. As I argued in Chapter Two, understanding PTSD as primarily fear-based rather than anxiety-based changes the scope and types of interventions we might utilize. In Chapter Two, I quoted psychoanalyst Ramzy, who stated that “The simplest and the most accurate way of defining anxiety, however, is perhaps to contrast it with its opposite, which is peace—peace of the mind” (1960, p. 18). Utilizing his statement, I surmised that while the antidote of anxiety is

peace, the antidote of fear is hope. Moreover, I have argued that hope is a part of the genesis of our emotion of fear as well. The dialectic created by the relationship between fear and hope sets them on an intimate relational course with one another. Thus, while they may feel like polar opposites where one is the antidote to the other, at the same time, they may not be able to exist without one another. That is, to know we are afraid is to acknowledge the expectations and hope we have in the face of our finitude. Moreover, being afraid also allows us to acknowledge the myriad ways in which the divine-human relationship reveals God's hopeful possibilities for beauty and harmony in the world.

A Neuro-Hermeneutical Framework for PTSD.

PTSD is a diagnosis that requires clinicians to think on multiple levels. Research on PTSD runs the gamut from quantitative to qualitative, neurological to existential. These various streams of research attest to the therapeutic interest in developing meaningful understandings and treatments. In this section, I want to summarize two recent studies that look into fear-based memories and PTSD in order to restate the integrated framework I have been proposing in this dissertation. The first study looks at the reconsolidation and extinction of fear-based memories. The authors use neurological approaches of collecting data in order to generate hypotheses about possible treatments for PTSD. The second study examines PTSD as a disorder of meaning, ultimately proposing that aspects of its recovery process need to be claimed by religious disciplines.

Together, these two studies provide a richer way to understand PTSD and fear-based memories as well as their impact on persons. They provide a brief look into the major arguments of this dissertation: namely, that PTSD and trauma are based in the

emotion of fear and as such neurological data can help us understand the physiological impact of both the experience and memory of a traumatic event. Moreover, because trauma involves memory it requires interpretation; thus, when traumatic memories are recalled a subjective and meaning-oriented narrative is developed. Theology, as a meaning-oriented enterprise, is one possible avenue for framing the impact of trauma as well as possible remedies. The remainder of this section will summarize these two studies and then conclude with an interpretation of how we might integrate this data into our understanding of PTSD.

A recent study by Monfils, Cowansage, Klann, and LeDoux (2009) examined how the interruption of the reconsolidation process of aversive memories may provide a non-pharmacological and lasting change in relation to a fear-inducing stimulus. Their research focused on the lability (instability) of fear-inducing memories which occurs for roughly six hours after the memory has been retrieved. During this window of time, the researchers (using rat subjects) introduced appropriate extinction training related to the stimulus which was designed to “result in the storage of the new nonthreatening meaning of the CS [conditioned stimulus] and prevent renewal, reinstatement, and spontaneous recovery, thus resulting in a more enduring reduction in fear relative to extinction training conducted outside the reconsolidation window” (2009, p. 951).

Utilizing various research groups the authors found that targeted extinction-based training provided within the window of memory reconsolidation suggested that “the CS no longer induces a fear response” (p. 954). Interpreting their own results, the authors opined that

This could mean that interference during reconsolidation [leads] to a progressive deconsolidation of the memory followed by the learning of a new interpretation of the CS, or that during reconsolidation, the new valence associated with the CS was incorporated in the updating. In either case, the initial valence conferred by the first conditioning session no longer seems to exist in its original fear-inducing form. (p. 954).

The authors note that future studies along these lines will have to work with whether the new interpretation of the stimulus is neutral or in fact creates a maladaptive safety signal in the presence of something that may cause harm; furthermore, they note that some other trials (with rats and humans) have met with limited success, revealing that the process may be susceptible to subtle manipulations (p. 955). Even with these caveats, there is much in this research that is relevant for clinicians.

Recent research such as this provides new ways of thinking about PTSD which can aid clinicians in their practice with those who have been traumatized. Finding a way to keep current with novel neurological data concerning PTSD and trauma can help reframe the disorder for both clinicians and clients. In this one study there are numerous avenues for continued thought and exploration. First, there is hope for those who suffer from PTSD. It is possible that the fear-inducing memories that cause the general hyperarousal to their surroundings can be altered and even extinguished. Second, one of the conditions of change seems to be related to the timeliness of our interventions. While these hypotheses provide promising avenues for exploration, they alone are not enough for us to begin new treatment courses. As I stated earlier, much of the neurological data we have collected is descriptive in nature. While this study is not unique in providing possible prescriptive avenues for further study, we should take the data and hypotheses as provisional and examine the caveats they contain.

The first of these caveats is related to the ability to catch an opened fearful memory in the window of time needed to change the reconsolidation process. One question from this is how should clinicians handle these moments when the fear-based memories are being experienced? Moreover, what kinds of interventions should be used in order to help the person create an alternative interpretation of the fear-based memory? Another caveat pertains to the characterization of PTSD and the inference that, for humans, a behavioral intervention might be enough to suffice for the destabilization of the fear-inducing memory. I have stated that fear contains a behavioral component. Yet, is merely changing behavior enough for human beings who are constantly interpreting and re-interpreting their environments and narratives? It would seem that for humans a fear-based memory has both behavioral and subjective qualities which would need to be attended to in our interventions. As has been the case throughout this dissertation, while neurological data can give us some grounding information and provide possible directions for exploration, this research should be brought into conversation with hermeneutical or theological analysis in order for a richer understanding of trauma to develop.

At the 2009 annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, psychiatrist Kinghorn presented an argument for PTSD as occurring on “the level of meaning and requires, in many cases, an irreducibly moral mode of analysis” (p. 6). According to Kinghorn, “the indispensability of subjectivity for the interpretation of trauma as ‘trauma’ renders it highly unlikely that either neurobiology or any form of behaviorism which excludes subjectivity could offer a sufficient causal account of PTSD” (p. 6). Basically,

PTSD is a “disorder” of meaning and subjectivity. The fear-inducing memory is one of unique interpretation by the experiencing being.

Kinghorn’s work helps us conceive of PTSD through an additional lens, adding to its meaning and possible interventions. Utilizing Kinghorn in conjunction with the earlier neurological research moves PTSD beyond being just a fear-inducing behavioral reaction. Instead we have to account for both the neurological, behavioral and meaning-oriented components of PTSD in order to accurately develop a course of intervention. Our thinking about PTSD should include our reactions and the (often existential) meanings that are locked together in the memories which induce our fears.

Kinghorn continued by stating that PTSD “points toward a human phenomenon which cannot abide any reductionism, which requires our strongest ‘second-order’ moral vocabulary, which cannot segregate the descriptive from the evaluative” (p. 13). If PTSD is a “disorder” of meaning, then theology is an appropriate discipline for reflection on its impact. This enables us to provide richer descriptions of someone’s fear-based memories. Thus, Kinghorn’s work would seem to provide an appropriate complication to the work of Monfils, Cowansage, Klann and LeDoux. Thinking of PTSD as a disorder of meaning requires us to see human subjects carrying interpretive capacities which stretch into ethical and moral realms. At the same time, if we are to broaden our perspective on PTSD, as Kinghorn suggests, then we cannot discount the possible ramifications of research related to the reconsolidation of fear-inducing memories.

Looking at these two studies together we can begin to develop an integrative framework of possible avenues for the treatment of PTSD. The neurologically developed

hypotheses provide us with an understanding of the necessity of timeliness in our interventions related to the recall of fear-based memories. PTSD, resulting from fear-based traumatic memories, may be affected by our ability to intervene in critical moments of a person's life. Furthermore, there are two possible avenues for intervening that need attention. Meaning-oriented and behavioral interventions may provide helpful avenues for people to re-interpret their fear-based memories and provide relief. Thus, as we are in conversation with people for whom fear-based memories provide a significant interpretive hurdle, a neuro-hermeneutical approach can help them reframe these memories in meaningful ways. For pastoral counselors specifically, this plays out in the ways in which we help someone develop the practices of faith which can mitigate some of the behavioral consequences of fear-based memories. Furthermore, we can also utilize theological meanings in order to reframe fear-based narratives to provide a richer component of hope. As I argued in Chapter Four, I find narrative therapy to provide pastoral counselors with effective treatment strategies that can accurately reflect this neuro-hermeneutical approach to PTSD and trauma.

From Posttraumatic Stress to Trauma

PTSD is one way of discussing the impact of traumatic events on the lives of people (and communities). I have established that PTSD is more likely a fear-based "disorder" that hinges on the memory of a trauma. However, trauma means more than just a particular event. Given that we interpret the world subjectively, postmodern philosophies are more apt to lean towards a broader understanding of trauma. This allows the person to define what is traumatic for them. The effort to broaden our understanding

of trauma is both advantageous and deleterious. While it allows us to stick closely to postmodern understandings of subjectivity, it also loosens the standards set forth in the *DSM* which help us understand clinically relevant data.

As a pastoral counselor and caregiver, I am acutely aware of the strain that sometimes haunts the relationship between clinical research and practice. There are times when diagnostic categories seem cold and formulaic; times when they do not fully capture the complaints of the person before me. Most often I seek to meet a person wherever they might be in life. From there, I hope to help them describe what they bring with them; often this means utilizing their language about their experiences, including broad definitions of trauma. In general, I will find myself erring on the side of the client regarding what is traumatic rather than strictly following a prescribed set of criteria. Our therapeutic conversations are not debates about postmodernism or *DSM* criteria; they are conversations about the impact of specific events a person experienced and how they interpret them in the movement of their lives.

I believe I have been advocating that we understand what is traumatic through emotional lenses. That is, trauma is related to the emotional state it engenders in the human being experiencing the event. Trauma will have a perceived tangible threat that gives rise to intense feelings of fear that result in behavioral responses – most often fight, flight, freeze and/or appease – which become residual interpretive criteria for that person's interactions with the world. This emotional carryover may reveal itself as a higher level of vigilance, often decreasing their ability to experience creativity and harmony in their relationships. At times, a person will live through lenses of hyper-

vigilance and hyperarousal that overwhelm their coping mechanisms even around previously nonthreatening stimuli. These reactions develop out of the initial fear response and are interpreted using meaning-oriented categories relative to a person's life.

Trauma, seen through an emotional lens, attends to the focus in clinical research literature that our reactions to traumatic events are fear-based responses. It also allows for the possibility that specific experiences not diagnosed as PTSD may have traumatic effects as well. The benefit of this characterization of trauma is the focus on emotions and their effects and meanings. Seeing trauma as a fear-based response to a threatening experience should open the scope of therapeutic possibilities for helping a person re-author their experiences and interpretations.

Understanding Trauma Through Theological and Narrative Lenses

In Chapter Four, I put forth the idea that narrative therapy is one way of implementing strategies which can help people live into their preferred identities. While I am certain other therapeutic modalities could utilize the relationship between hope and fear, narrative therapy seems uniquely poised to incorporate a neuro-hermeneutical stance towards trauma. Narrative therapy takes serious the dynamic nature of identity, the probability of re-authoring our identities and the ways in which we actively resist threats to our preferred identity. As such, narrative therapists are open to the interpretation people carry with them relative to their experiences. Part of the work of narrative therapists is to help facilitate the creation of thick descriptions. The use of neuropsychological data is one resource that can help inform this thickening process. Moreover, they realize that an initial story is apt to change as conversation continues.

Consequently, narrative therapists find themselves listening for the counternarrative indicating active resistance to a particular narrative. This “double-listening” is necessary for pastoral counselors and caregivers who wish to find the embedded narratives of hope in a fear-based experience. The remainder of this section examines how one narrative therapist characterized his work with trauma. While explaining his position, I want to apply a theological lens to his work in order to fully develop this neuro-hermeneutical lens.

The double listening approach narrative therapists take toward therapy highlights the possibilities inherent in an experience. Narrative therapists see the traumatic experience people share as but one interpretation of the event. White (2006) explained a narrative view of trauma³⁹ by remarking that

No one is a passive recipient of trauma. People always take steps in endeavoring to prevent the trauma they are subject to, and, when preventing this trauma is clearly impossible, they take steps to try to modify it in some way or to modify its effects on their lives. These steps contribute to the preservation of, and are founded upon, what people hold precious. Even in the face of overwhelming trauma, people take steps to try to protect and to preserve what they give value to. (p. 28)

This view of traumatic experiences is closely related to the view I have proposed in this dissertation. The missing elements of this explanation are the emotional and theological impact of a traumatic experience. However, I can see that the roots of for exploring fear and hope are implicit in White’s views of trauma.

White believed that people actively attempt to relieve or prevent trauma. I see this as a reframing of the behaviors associated with a fear reaction. He also remarked that people ground these behaviors in what they value, adding that “People’s responses to trauma are based on what they give value to, on what they hold precious in life” (2006, p.

28). In other words, hope guides our activity in the face of threats and trauma. White generally supports what I have specifically laid out in this dissertation. Namely, that fear is a reaction undergirded by our hopes to survive, cope and thrive. For the theologically-minded, the question we must wrestle with is what is the locus of value that a person seeks to protect and preserve? Furthermore, is there something greater than themselves that grounds their ability to see and seek to thrive in the future? For those who seek solace in the possibilities of the divine-human relationship, then the answer to that question is found in the construction of that theological and faith-oriented relationship which grounds our hopes.

In order to develop these hopeful stories White actively seeks counternarratives. He described his posture of double listening by stating that “When meeting people who are consulting me about trauma and its aftermath, I hear the story about the trauma, but I also hear expressions of what people have continued to accord value to in their lives despite what they have been through” (2006, p. 30). I interpret this to mean that hope undergirds the fears we experience, and also provides the first evidence of hopeful counternarratives in the aftermath of trauma. As therapists, our goal is to help develop these hopeful counternarratives so that they provide as rich a source of interpretation as the trauma-saturated narrative. As theologically-minded therapists, we are tasked to listen with a third ear that seeks out the theological themes raised in traumatic narratives. As double listeners, we should also seek to develop theological themes of resistance to a traumatic narrative. These themes form the grounding material for movement towards meaningful theological interaction with a traumatic narrative.

Finally, I see the emotion of fear as an adaptive emotion which seeks to aid a person in surviving and coping with threats. Process theology helps provide a strand of meaning-oriented thought which further interprets the emotion of fear as intimately tied to human hopes. This theological understanding completes the picture of the relationship between fear and hope. With the input of narrative therapy we can see that a process theological understanding of the relationship between fear and hope provides a tangible method of helping people utilize overt and covert narratives which can enhance their ability to cope and thrive.

Statement of Perspective

Every therapist enters a therapeutic conversation with a perspective on human beings, what ails them and what provides relief. This dissertation developed a particular perspective on the emotion of fear and its relationship to hope. Before turning from theory to practice, I want to offer a brief summary of the work in this dissertation. This final summary proposition is based on my understanding of the materials offered in this project. It begins with my perspective on human beings; continues with an examination of fear and hope and concludes with the three themes that will guide a neuro-hermeneutical therapeutic conversation.

Human beings are social creatures living in an interdependent world. We live and move and become in relationship with and reaction to the world around us. The human self or identity develops through narrative habits we adopt in order to adapt to a variety of settings and circumstances. Our long memories and active imaginations help reinforce these habits; at the same time they also give us the opportunity to re-story our lives.

Human beings are also unique physical actors in the world. We share particular neurophysiological similarities with other animal species such as the amygdala, yet we also have unique capacities. These structures have evolved throughout human history in order to help us adapt to our environments. Therefore, while fear is expressed similarly across species, human memory, belief systems and imagination create unique conditions for the expression of fear in human beings.

Human beings are emotional creatures. Neuropsychology affirms the embodied nature of emotions. Emotions contribute significantly to our experiences and the habits that form our selves; they also influence our relationships and imaginative possibilities. Our emotional experiences form lasting and intense memories which can be recalled with greater ease. Just as psychology affirms the embodied nature of our emotional lives, so too should our theology. As theological creatures embedded in relational systems, emotions can be understood as adaptive and not inherently life limiting; moreover, they contribute a measure of passion, direction and possibility to the reciprocal interactions of the divine-human relationship. Our theological systems cannot afford to ignore the impact and importance of emotions. Process theology provides a framework for taking embodied emotions seriously. Thompson he characterized the emotional reciprocity of the divine-human relationship, stating that:

God feels the world's feelings just like our entire body feels a sensation coming from only one spot. God is "internally affected" by all the world's activity: "God laughs with us, cries with us, loves with us, feels pain when we do, enjoys satisfaction with us" (Goggin, 1995, p 128). Just as humans can experience periods of durable happiness in spite of episodes of illness, stress, etc... so God can respond to the world's challenges yet remain "everlastingly, essentially happy" (Shields, 1992, p. 57). (2005, pp. 26-27)

This relationship is predicated on the possibility of co-determination and the sense that God lives and acts passionately and persuasively with us in the world. This persuasive power provides for an open future where we are able to enact novel stories and re-imagined narratives. Thus, the possibilities of continued or renewed hope are available.

I see the emotion of fear as an inescapable part of human life. The amygdala is an active participant in the genesis of this emotional state and the behaviors that it includes. The emotion of fear is an intense reaction to a real or imagined threat, leading a person to enact a particular set of adaptive defensive behaviors. The purpose of fear in animals is to aid them in surviving and coping with a threat. For human beings, that purpose is further elucidated in the imaginative desire to thrive in the world. This ability to thrive develops out of our neurological capacities and plasticity of the human brain, which create unique opportunities related to memory and imagination. Thus, our lives are comprised of the remembered stories we enact and tell, as well as the attainable hopes we project into the future. Not only do we form habits which direct our lives, but we also can re-form our habits and re-author our stories.

Through our imaginations and the true openness of the future, our fear-based behaviors reveal a desire to live out a preferred future. These fear-based behaviors direct us towards the hope that we might live another day. Thus, fear is a vehicle through which our hopes can be drawn out and/or revealed. While the purpose of fear may be revealed in its actions, we can derive the meaning of fear through an understanding of the divine-human relationship. The interrelated world is not perfect. There are times when relationships collide and produce situations of threat and trauma. Fear, interpreted as a

manifestation of God's love and persuasive power, may also be interpreted as a manifestation of God's hope and initial aims in particular situations.

I see human beings as relational, physical and emotional beings who act in the world through the divine-human relationship. Thus, a theological anthropology informs my interpretation of the emotion of fear and its importance for therapeutic settings. In process theology, it is thought that the world evolved through the persuasive power of God and that God continues to be intimately active in it. To be afraid is to realize that we are a part of an interrelated structure of life. When we are afraid we not only realize a threat or recognize a traumatic event, we also act according to a latent hope that reveals the possibilities of life for us. The full meaning of our fear should encompass not only the behaviors that help us survive a threat or trauma, but also an awareness of the hopes that make our behaviors relevant. We cannot be afraid without also being hopeful that something in our lives is worth living for. Fear does not just protect us from something; it protects us for something as well.

While it is helpful to think that at the genesis of fear there is hope, there are times when an experience of the emotion of fear is overwhelming. The memory and imaginations of human beings can run amuck as they incorporate real and possible threats into narratives. In these moments, it is easy to lose sight of the hopeful possibilities of the initial aims of God. Instead, we cope with the world through a fear-based interpretive scheme. When these moments of hyper-arousal and hyper-vigilance prevail, it is important for pastoral caregivers and pastoral counselors to be able to point to the hopeful possibilities endemic to the emotion of fear. As pastoral caregivers/counselors we should

place the emotion of fear in the context of a meaningful divine-human relationship. The main themes that we can utilize to develop this complex relationship between fear and hope are surviving, coping and thriving.

Utilizing neurological data and an understanding of fear-based behaviors, pastoral caregivers and counselors can normalize reactions to threats and trauma. Empathy and education can help a person take a meaningful perspective on the narratives they bear. The desire to survive is normal; to remain in survival mode prevents us from developing an awareness of God's continued prodding towards the possibilities of novel future moments. In addition to survival, fear helps us cope with threats. To that end, a person's coping skills are revealed in the ways they handle a relationship with a threat. A primary task of the pastoral caregiver/counselor is to help a person develop the skills to enact an alternate narrative more closely aligned to their preferred identity. Finally, our active imaginations provide access to novel possibilities. The emotion of fear is related to human hope. As a person re-authors a threatening or traumatic narrative, one goal is to reconnect them to the hope that enabled their survival behaviors and their desire to cope with the event. Utilizing a process framework and the enriched narratives developed in therapeutic conversation, a person can reclaim the goodness of life that they felt had been lost through their traumatic experience. With that in mind, I want to turn to the case study to see how this might be accomplished.

Illustrating a Neuro-Hermeneutical Approach to Therapy

This final section is about Rachael.⁴⁰ At the time of our consultation, Rachael was a single female living in a transitional urban environment. Since her graduation from

college a few years earlier, she worked for a local business and lived in an apartment nearby. Rachael was engaged (she is now married) to a longtime boyfriend. Her family lived about an hour away from her apartment downtown. Rachael called to talk with me about a recent traumatic experience

About a month before our first meeting, Rachael was mugged in the atrium of her apartment building. After unlocking the main door to the building her perpetrator slipped in behind her and violently pushed her against a wall. Her assailant grabbed her purse. Rachael described feeling frozen as the moments of the attack slowed and seemed to take forever. Her memory of the event was vivid. She knew the exact spot on the wall where she bruised her head when the assailant attacked. She knew where the plants were in relationship to her position. She could recall numerous details about her surroundings. Rachael, with her words, drew an accurate picture of the room and the event, as though it was taking place again before her eyes.

In the month after her attack, Rachael moved from her apartment. She was now living in the basement of her future in-laws until her wedding a few months later. Her family felt that Rachael needed a safe place to live until her wedding. Physically speaking, it worked. When she was inside the house, Rachael felt safe and secure. When she left the house, life was a different story.

Despite her knowledge of the event, Rachael only knew limited details about her attacker. Whenever she would come across someone resembling her memories she would find herself withdrawing relationally. Sometimes the voice of a co-worker would engage her fear-based memory; another time the shadow of someone walking by her office

would frighten her; in another moment, she reacted with frightfully, practically jumping out of her chair, when someone appeared at her office door. She reached the point where her ability to work was being hindered by the memories she carried with her.

Work was not the only place that she noticed the memories surfacing. Rachael observed that she rarely went out at night with her friends. Once a highly social person, Rachael now preferred to stay in at night. Going out was no longer worth the risk to her. Part of this, she rationalized, was her wanting to be a good guest while living with her in-laws. At one point she let it slip that the walk from the driveway to the front door of their house was unnerving to her. In front of her in-laws house was a high row of hedges that were poorly lit. As she would walk by in the evening or at night, the shadows would spark her imagination. She would see a man crouching in the bushes or feel a threat emerge with every rustle of leaves. It got to the point where, Rachael required an escort by her future father-in-law from the front door to the driveway. To Rachael, the world seemed to lack security, and threats loomed in every shadow or surprise.

When I met Rachael, I was a new therapist. The primary method of assessment I felt comfortable with was the *DSM*. Based on the information Rachael gave me in our initial interviews, I diagnosed her with PTSD and proceeded to work with her through the best methods I could find. These included the insights of clinicians at the counseling center, resources they offered and whatever therapeutic acumen I possessed. At the time I embraced both the anxiety orientation of PTSD and the practice of psychodynamic and cognitive interventions. While these therapeutic disciplines grounded me, it would be a mistake to say that my therapeutic identity was established. I was quite fluid in my

appropriation of strategies to the benefit and detriment of clients I saw. To be sure, there were moments in therapy that were helpful to Rachael. However, utilizing this new framework, I think I could have done better. Most of the work I did with Rachael dealt with the symptoms she described after the traumatic event. Very little of our time was spent on the trauma itself. Given the chance to revisit our therapy, I would focus a bit more on the narrative of the trauma (the event) in order to thicken and seek out the counternarratives. This does not mean I would ignore the symptoms she was facing, which were more closely aligned with PTSD. However, this new focus would allow me to utilize a neuro-hermeneutical frame which would appropriately deal with the fear-based memory she carries with her. The remainder of this chapter is a re-visioning of the care I would hope to offer Rachael today.

Helping Rachael Survive, Cope and Thrive

My intent in re-visioning the care I offered Rachael is to construct a theologically grounded approach to therapy which pays attention to the role fear and hope play in her interpretive frame. To that end, I will explore how the themes of surviving, coping and thriving might play out while revisiting our therapeutic conversations. I present these themes in the same order that I have presented them throughout this dissertation. This doesn't mean that there is a linear protocol or that one theme necessarily precedes or follows another. I recognize the fluidity of therapy and the manner in which emotions and narratives flow in random patterns. You may find glimpses of a person thriving in midst of their survival narrative. However, for the sake of this presentation I will discuss the themes in the order listed above. In Chapter Four, I described four narrative tools that are

a practical fit with this paradigm of thought about fear: externalization, counternarratives, taking a stand and re-authoring preferred identities. In addition to these tools, themes of resistance and resilience will emerge as important touch points of change. In the midst of this therapeutic re-visioning it is important to remember that as counselors and caregivers we are witnesses to intense and intimate moments of people's lives; we are outsiders who are accorded the rare opportunity to listen to the experiences of others. In these moments we share in a small way the burden they bear concerning their fear-based narratives.

Surviving.

Looking at Rachael's narrative, she exhibited three fear-oriented behaviors. In addition to the initial freezing moment, there was a physical appeasement as Rachael released her purse, as well as a mental flight which enabled Rachael to protect her self. All three of these happenings – freezing, mental flight and appeasement – provide cues that should enable a therapist to understand this experience as a fear-based response. Each behavior is linked to a set of actions which helped Rachael survive her experience. Put simply, her physiological and mental adaptive behaviors responded appropriately to the circumstances to the event. All in all, she protected herself as best as she could, given the circumstances she endured. Aside from her behaviors, Rachael also described physical sensations akin to a fear-based response. These included a rapid heartbeat, muscle tension and a keen awareness of some of the details of her surroundings.

Part of treating a fear-based event from a neuro-hermeneutical perspective is helping someone develop an understanding of the story they tell themselves. In therapy we are dealing with both the event (trauma) and resulting behaviors and meanings

(possibly PTSD) that are constructed. In this case, Rachael's adaptive survival mechanisms worked; however, in subsequent weeks these mechanisms did not abate as Rachael withdrew from her relationships, was hypervigilant and reacted was experienced a sense of hyperarousal towards previously nonthreatening stimuli. In order to help Rachael, I would provide additional information which might help add a sense of richness about her particular experience. One way to begin doing this is to share some knowledge concerning normal physiological reactions to threats. This would include neurological information about fear, its behavioral cues and effect on our memories.

Engaging in a process which normalizes our survival behaviors can have a number of possible effects on people. First and foremost, it helps provide an embodied perspective concerning the physiological issues we deal with when authoring our identities. Additionally, it helps ground the process of externalization by separating the event from our reactions to it. Finally, it can provide some spiritual benefit by helping people take a perspective on the behaviors as they relate to the activity of a loving and caring God. A second piece of this survival puzzle relates to how we understand the memories that impact our behaviors. To that end, I would want to discuss the impact emotions have on our memories and how our brains privilege this information.

Rachael's story revealed other clues about her embodied fear reaction. These included the kind of vividness related to the dilation of pupils and heightened awareness. As she was pushed against the wall, with her back to her assailant, she focused on what she could see. During her first telling of the event, she could visually remember little more than the wall, plants in the atrium and a few other visual cues. However, these

details were something that stuck out in her mind. As the event unfolded, Rachael's fear response system kicked into high gear as she sought to survive. Beyond the initial freezing moment, Rachael could not remember being very aware of her body. After the event she felt the tension in her muscles as they returned to their normal state. Rather than fight her attacker, Rachael released her purse and retreated from the situation. She couldn't remember much about her assailant, nor could she recall the content of the 911 phone call following the attack.

As a corollary to these embodied reactions, Rachael described a sense of shame related to not being able to fully describe her attacker to the police. Furthermore, having taken self-defense courses, she felt as though she should have fought back. These feelings provide another possible entry point to discuss the physiology of intense fear; especially since survival is a key element to our fear-based responses to threats in the environment. By describing the impact fear has on the body, Rachael might come to understand her reaction to the event; she may even begin to see her reaction as adaptive, helping her protect herself and survive the attack. Rachael's ability to vividly describe what she could see revealed an adaptive response to the event. By giving up her purse without a fight, she reacted with a fear-based response of appeasement. Given the circumstances of the event and her interpretation of what was happening, this was probably the best course of action. Her mental flight and subsequent lack of memory concerning the moments following the trauma are within a normal range of behaviors for someone feeling the intense emotion of fear. Helping Rachael understand that her reaction to the event fits a normal pattern of fear-based reactions may alleviate some of the shame she felt.

Furthermore, it prepares her to look at her subsequent reactions within a new framework related to fear-based behaviors.

Rachael's continued need for safety and survival played out in meaningful ways following the trauma. She was hypervigilant, reclusive and intensely aware of her surroundings. Given what is understood about memory and the effects that emotions have on our subjective interpretations of the world, Rachael reacted to her environment normally. Her interpretive framework shifted under the weight of the overwhelming memory of the traumatic event. Memories such as these are easier to recall, last longer and are more intense. Thus, when she experienced reminders of the event in nonthreatening situations, she continued to act out of the novel framework acquired during her traumatic event.

Using the process theological framework outlined in Chapter Five, I see Rachael's initial reactions to this event as a moment when the persuasive power of God enabled her to react with the emotion of fear in order to survive. There were a lot of unknowns to Rachael's story. Did the person have a weapon? Was there more than one attacker? If she yelled would anyone hear her or would it enrage her attacker? The best possible fear-response in this particular moment (other fear-responses such as fighting may be appropriate elsewhere), given the unknowns in the situation, may have been appeasement and mental flight in order to attain the greatest chance to survive for another day. Making a theological assertion such as this within the framework of a caregiving or counseling relationship may not be appropriate at the initial outset of the relationship. Instead, keeping with the process theological framework assertions about God's immanence

(closeness) and God's intimate emotional reactivity to the pain and fear felt by Rachael would provide an initial theological framework for later understandings of how to place a traumatic event within the realm of meaning and hope. Furthermore, helping Rachael understand that the instinct for survival is nothing to be ashamed of and is instead a part of the intricate ways God persuades humans into being throughout the years in order to survive a sometimes hostile world.

With Rachael I used a lot of normalizing information relative to the human response of fear in particular situations. From a narrative perspective, this presents novel interpretations of Rachael's story and what it means to be human; moreover, it gives Rachael a new interpretation which can be incorporated into her story and help thicken her reaction to the trauma. Understanding that the body reacts in specific ways to threatening stimuli helps create a multi-faceted therapeutic milieu where Rachael could begin developing an alternative story concerning her role in the narrative. Finally, this could provide a way to distinguish between Rachael's residual fear reactions and the counternarratives that operate in other times of her life. This would help draw out counternarratives and alternative stories, aiding Rachael to see where she resists the trauma and copes and thrives relative to nonthreatening stimuli.

Coping.

Fear and its associated behaviors are basically coping mechanisms for threatening situations. The ability to fight, flee, freeze and/or appease are coping strategies used to deal with the immediacy of a particular threat. They are actions related to an "in the moment" physiological response. What this means is that the emotion of fear and its

behaviors quickly arise and are meant to quickly abate as well. In Rachael's case, the coping actions her physical self employed in the moment of her traumatic experience were freezing, appeasing and a mental flight from the event. While these coping mechanisms were not her first choices (using her training in self-defense would have been a little less shameful to her), her body and brain actually reacted normally to her circumstances. Rachael experienced difficulty when her imagination and fear-based memory of the event could not be reasonably controlled. Her memory and the imaginative possibilities it created overwhelmed her ability to cope with the event and its aftermath. While Rachael's physical self functioned as planned during the event, it became apparent that she needed new coping skills to help her deal with a memory that was intrusive and sometimes overwhelming.

As stated earlier, PTSD results from the experience of a trauma which overwhelms a person's coping mechanisms disallowing them to resume what they would consider a normal life. To that end, psychiatrist Allen (2005) noted that two types of coping skills are often needed to help those with overwhelming traumatic memories navigate the world more effectively. The first of these skills relates to "emotion-focused coping" or "efforts to regulate your emotional state" (p. 226). The second set of coping skills is "problem-focused" or "direct efforts to modify the problem at hand" (p. 226). Allen focuses more on emotional regulation and recognition; these skills help someone develop a small measure of control over their situation through honest emotional appraisal. Recognizing the emotions that one feels while remembering/reliving a traumatic experience may help someone find ways to confront and/or cope with the

conflict that arises in certain relationships, whether they are threatening or not (p. 226). This type of emotional appraisal is not often found in narrative therapeutic literature. However, I believe emotional states, examined and dealt with appropriately, add to the narratives a person develops about a particular event. Just as information about physiological responses to trauma helps Rachael to normalize the emotion of fear, developing coping skills which help her access alternative narrative provide a form of resistance to the traumatic narrative.

In Rachael's case, she might have been helped by recognizing the reverberations of the emotion of fear that arose in some nonthreatening situations. Since her memory and imagination were giving a fear-based memory priority in nonthreatening settings, she may have been able to develop the kind of pause needed to circumvent the intrusive behaviors she experienced. The utilization of calming techniques in order to produce the pause needed to regulate the strength of her emotional responses could help Rachael access additional narrative possibilities which could then counter her reaction. These techniques might range from simple meditation and mantras to bi-lateral stimulation or more complex imaginative processes in order to help a person begin to self-regulate the emotions that are dominating their interpretive frames. Emotional regulation is only the beginning of helping someone cope with a traumatic memory though. While these techniques don't fit within strict narrative therapeutic frameworks, their effectiveness with particular persons can aid someone in enacting a preferred identity by providing an alternate narrative to enact.

The stance of narrative therapists towards the traumas people bring with them is that these people are not passive witnesses to trauma; rather, they are active participants in their narratives. To that end, narrative therapists are bound to be more problem-focused in their interpretation and conversation with others about their traumatic narratives. Before turning to how a problem-focused approach in therapy could help Rachael cope with her narrative, I want to return to the interplay between emotions and memories to add a significant twist to traditional narrative therapy.

Payne (2006) remarked that narrative theory “emphasizes that people interpret (make sense of) the experiences they bring to therapy primarily through seeing them through cultural and social lenses, rather than inherited biological or psychological factors” (p. 21). If this is the case, utilizing a neuro-hermeneutical framework as a guiding principle for practicing narrative therapy would seem to be an oxymoron. Based on the research in this dissertation, I can only come to a different conclusion. I agree that the narratives we tell are heavy-laden with cultural and social interpretations, yet traumatic narratives are unique. Their uniqueness develops through the emotional content derived from physiological sensations felt during an event and in subsequent nonthreatening situations. Thus, while our interpretive frames will never escape their social and cultural conditioning, there is physiologically-based emotional information which may be useful to the therapeutic process. I think it behooves narrative therapists to be more conversant in how emotions impact the force of a memory and its imaginative repercussions. A person’s activity relative to a traumatic memory is strengthened by the emotional association with that memory. This emotional association is physiologically

derived and interpreted socially and culturally by the story teller. These emotions give passion and direction to our memories and thoughts. Narrative therapists should honor the emotional content of a particular traumatic narrative. Furthermore, an understanding of the ways emotions shape and drive particular narratives provides additional resources and thematic paths for exploration. Payne's emphasis on the cultural and social to the detriment of physiological and psychological data is short-sighted. All facets of human life are important if narrative therapy is to truly be helpful to people.

Additionally, pastorally focused therapists should feel a special connection to the embodied experience of emotions derived through the "created" self and shared in the stories we tell about the divine-human relationship. As pastoral counselors and caregivers, we share a basic theologically-oriented view of the self and the wholeness and brokenness brought to each situation. Emotions provide valuable information about how we are created to respond to threats and other stimuli in our environments. Through the concept of the emotion of fear in this dissertation, we develop a sense of both God's care for us and God's hope for our futures. Without paying attention to the physiologically-derived benefits of our emotions and their impact on our memories and imaginative narrational creations we lose a valuable resource that helps us provide a place of care where people are valued for the stories they bring with them.

Returning to Rachael's case, I already laid the groundwork for an understanding of God's immanence in her life. Additionally, I helped her recognize the role that emotions play in the creation and remembering of traumatic stories. By carefully explaining the ways in which the brain reacts to threats, I attempted to provide a way of

explaining her reaction to those traumatic moments as normal behavior rather than something aberrant or shaming. I sought to thicken her story and make it more complex by talking about the need for survival in the midst of a threat. Additionally, I added some calming techniques which can help her regulate the continued experience of the emotion of fear in nonthreatening situations, as well as add a narrative of resistance and resilience when she is successful. My attention to helping Rachael should not be limited to these interventions alone. Coping is not just about the development of skills or a thickened narrative related to the abatement of the emotional and situational stress related to residual traumatic activity. From a narrative therapeutic perspective the ability to cope with a traumatic experience ultimately comes from two sources: resistance and resilience.

This is where White's insistence on double-listening becomes important. As we hear Rachael's traumatic story, our second ear is listening for the counternarratives that arise from each telling. Deconstructing questions would provide a specific direction to help Rachael thicken the unique story she remembers. Was there a moment during the threatening encounter that Rachael felt herself resist what was happening? Rachael was told by her attacker not to call the police, but as soon as he left she dialed 911 (an emergency number in the U.S.). How did she muster the strength to do this? What did she tell the operator before the police arrived? Even the ability to dial the phone shows a level of resistance to the threat and resilience in the face of trauma. In the moments following the trauma were there other things Rachael did to covertly and overtly resist what happened to her? Did she tell or warn her neighbors about what happened? In this way she would be resisting the impulse to pull within herself.

Though Rachael's story about the trauma was rife with an appropriate sense of feeling victimized by another person, there were other ways to thicken her story by naming her resistance to the event. Furthermore, these moments of resistance also reveal the possibility of a latent hope Rachael experienced related to the event. For her to resist, even in some small way, reveals a counternarrative of hope challenging her dominant fear-driven narrative. It could be her hope that this wouldn't happen to someone else; it could be a hope of recovering a sense of control over the event; it might even be a hope related to strengthening herself in the midst of an unsettling time. Additionally, we would seek to develop the theological themes apparent in her counternarratives. Was there a moment of feeling closer to God? How does this event challenge or conform to her faith in and about God? How does she understand the source of her strength to resist the threat, in whatever way she recognizes? Exploring the event with Rachael may provide myriad avenues for discovering the ways in which she resisted the trauma and thicken its impact on the self she constructed as a result of what happened.

Helping Rachael explore her resilience as she re-experiences the trauma in nonthreatening moments is a way to help her examine how she lives alternative narratives in the times when the memory seems pervasive. Questions about Rachael's resilience identify moments of her life when the identity she performs is more in line with the identity she prefers. Are there moments when Rachael feels safe and secure? What does she experience in those moments? Has she experienced being surprised without feeling as though she was overreacting? How does Rachael navigate the bushes in front of her in-laws house when no one else is around to escort her? How does she overcome her fears in

order to make it from the car to the house when no one is there to help? Are there times at work when she is surprised without being afraid?

Rachael was able to go to work and spend time with her fiancé outside of the house. This exhibits a certain measure of control and strength. In these moments of strength, how did Rachael define herself differently? Even though the trauma inhabited much of her thinking, it was obvious that there was a lot more to her life than just this one story. What were the stories Rachael told herself in these moments?

Another method of helping develop these stories would come from the perspective of outsiders. Johnson (2002) stated that “improving an individual’s closest relationships can be a crucial element in addressing multidimensional problems that involve the whole personality, such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)” (p. 5). This could be accomplished by having her in-laws provide a letter describing their perspective concerning how Rachael was dealing with the traumatic event; her fiancé could attend a therapeutic session in order to provide his perspective on Rachael’s ability to cope with the event with strength and resilience. Through letter writing or the witness of an outsider, Rachael has the opportunity to build a new narrative for herself. It also reinforces the communal bonds that can strengthen her resolve for dealing with the trauma. Johnson continued by noting that “if a person’s connection with significant others is not part of the coping and healing process, then, inevitably, it becomes part of the problem and even a source of retraumatization” (p. 7). A narrative pastoral therapist might broaden the definition of significant to include others who had been traumatized in order to allow Rachael to act upon the injustice of her trauma. Even if none of these

persons were available, the therapist could ask Rachael to put herself in these other peoples' shoes and provide their perspective as to how she was doing.

In order to provide Rachael with the milieu to develop a complex understanding of the event and its subsequent memory and imaginative possibilities a narrative therapist would be very active in helping Rachael describe alternative stories about the “in-between” times. Developing these stories of resistance and resilience help Rachael add additional complex meanings and descriptions to her traumatic story. They also provide the environment through which a narrative therapist can listen for “signs of what the person has continued to give value to in life despite all they have been through, and for any expressions that might provide some hint of the person’s *response* to trauma” (White, 2006, p. 28, *italics author’s*). Listening for these counternarratives to the traumatic story provides the fuel for identifying how a person lived or reminded themselves of what they hope for next.

As Rachael identified some hopeful possibilities, I would have asked her to take a position on the self she described in her traumatic narrative. Is the person she described revealing herself in the fullest? While it is obvious that this traumatized person exists in some stories, is it truly the extent of how she understands herself? How does she want to relate to the person she describes in her narrative concerning the future? How will she choose to take a perspective on this person that fully reveals what she knows about her life, her experiences, her faith and her responsible embodied response to the event? Once Rachael has taken a stand relative to the fullness of the self she has developed, it is time to wonder with her what the future will hold.

Thriving.

Up to this point the pastoral therapy conversation centered on developing a narrative that fully describes the impact of fear on Rachael's life from the event to the present. Our conversation revolved around developing moments of resistance and resilience and sought the input of others from Rachael's community of family and friends. Throughout the therapeutic conversation Rachael revealed different glimpses of the preferred self she was seeking. These glimpses were tantamount to the hopes Rachael carried as revealed through the fear she was experiencing. They were also the beginning point of helping Rachael think about what it means to thrive. Thriving means to act upon the hopes we have for the future despite (or even because) of our experiences. In a narrative context, to thrive is to grasp and act out a preferred identity. In process thought, to thrive is to realize the impact of the total experiences that the past have on a present moment, but to hold that in tension with the persuasive call of God towards beauty and novelty. Through an awareness of this convergence of experiences someone can seek to reclaim some of the goodness of their life. Taken together, the pastoral therapy conversation reveals an orientation toward the future that doesn't negate the past but seeks to incorporate it in new ways in order to act upon a preferred identity often hidden in the relationship between fear and hope. Seeking opportunities to help Rachael flourish, through the reframing of her story in light of the hope revealed in the emotion of fear, can help her take a stand on the identity she prefers. In a pastoral theological context, we should be prepared to recognize the ways that people thrive despite the circumstances of their lives. However, we should also be aware that some people might never reach the

point where they can accept/access the latent hope and the possibilities for thriving that come with their fears.

For some people, the main components of pastoral therapy will be surviving and coping. It is important to note that not everyone will reach the point where something positive and hopeful can grow out of a traumatic experience. As psychologists Calhoun and Tedeschi (1999) noted “Posttraumatic growth is common, but it is not universal... there are some sets of circumstances where even the consideration by outsiders that posttraumatic growth may be possible can be regarded by trauma survivors as naïve or even obscene” (p. 16). From a theological point of view, Farley (1990) utilized the term “radical suffering” to denote “suffering that has the power to dehumanize and degrade human beings...and that cannot be traced to punishment or desert” (p. 12). For some trauma victims, the notion of radical suffering is very relevant. As a result of their experiences, any road taken to find a preferred identity seems too difficult, and the notion that we might actually “grow” from our suffering would feel naïve and offensive. This is why the emphasis on resistance and resilience is so important. As Farley later noted, “If suffering and destruction cannot be overcome, they can be resisted. It is in the resistance itself, in this refusal to give up the passion for justice, that tragedy can be transcended” (1990, p. 27). Thus, our first steps are listening for a person’s ability to take a stand relative to the traumatic event that signifies the readiness to move towards re-authoring their identities. This ability to take a stand and resist a traumatic narrative recognizes the desire to thrive in spite of the memory that sometimes feels consuming. For a person to thrive through their traumatic experiences, they must find some way to reclaim the

goodness of life beyond just resisting a fear-based memory. Recognizing someone's resistance opens them to the undercurrent of hope in the emotion of fear; reclaiming the goodness of life utilizes their imaginative capacities to create alternative hopeful scenarios for their lives. The work of the caregiver is to help foster the best situation for posttraumatic growth and the re-authoring of identities. This takes time as people discern the small or large steps that will take them in the direction they wish to go. Therapists should be able to acknowledge people's work, encourage the steps they take, create an environment which recognizes resistance and resilience and offer the opportunity for someone to reclaim goodness as they are able.

For a pastoral counselor or caregiver, it helps to think that God provides initial aims which reveal the most hopeful possibilities for a particular experience. As such, a theological grounding for thriving through trauma might include the notion that when fear is felt in the presence of a threat, undergirding it is an essential hope conveyed through the persuasive power of God for the continuity of life and possibilities entailed within it. That is, trauma can provide the kind of complex contrasting experience whereby not only fear is overwhelming but the presence of hope may be as well. Thus, when exploring the relationship between fear and hope with Rachael it would be important to keep this process perspective on the divine-human relationship in the back of our minds. Practically, this exploration might begin with Rachael's understanding of the relationships in her life. How did they give her strength? How was their importance a part of the will to survive and cope with the trauma? For Rachael, there were significant loving relationships which provided tangible points of contact for her past, current and

future hopes. In order to help Rachael thrive, helping her see how these relationships provided a significant source of hope for her to act appropriately during and after her trauma. My role as a conversation partner with Rachael would grow in these moments to move beyond just finding times of resistance and resilience to also helping Rachael develop the contrasting narrative to her traumatic experience. That is, what narrative is pushing Rachael to reclaim the goodness of life she feels is lost? What relationships or passions provide the impulse and desire to move beyond her captivity to the traumatic narrative? Certainly, there are narratives involving family, friends and her fiancé that provide some of these impulses. Rachael's visions for her preferred identity provide the initial steps in her reclamation process. One of Rachael's goals for therapy was to reconnect with her stolen social self. By connecting the emotion of fear to the undercurrent of hope threaded through her narrative, we develop a juxtaposing narrative which can mitigate some of the impact of the fear Rachael experienced. Furthermore, by looking at the meaning—the reasons why Rachael acted out of fear—we make an explicit connection to Rachael's continued relational vision throughout the past and current experience of her trauma. In essence, Rachael never lost that social self. Instead, her interpretive frame shifted by only being able to see through the impact of the emotion of fear. Weaving the narratives of hope Rachael carries into this fear-based memory provides a richer understanding of the experience. This should alter her interpretive frame one more time. Helping Rachael reconnect with this relational frame offers one avenue of exploration for her. It gives Rachael a tangible narrative through which she can re-

examine her trauma in order to re-assess its importance and utilize the useful parts of the experience for further interactions in her life.

Another therapeutic goal of Rachael's was to reduce her feeling of shame related to her behavior in nonthreatening situations. Her shame was tied to her experience of fear and the impact of its reverberations. To this point we have established an alternate thread which highlights the points of hope woven within her story. Having experienced herself as others see her and discussing the significant ways she acts to live out a hopeful future, empowering Rachael to tell and share her story with others might provide significant relief for her feelings of shame. To that end, I would encourage Rachael to write a letter of support for others experiencing a similar situation. If they were available, I would also ask Rachael to read similar letters written by others so that any sense of isolation could be dealt with openly in the therapeutic conversation. The most practical narrative and process-oriented task related to Rachael's shame would be to reconnect her with a cloud of witnesses to a similar event. That Rachael is able to go to work and function is a testament to her strength and resilience. Offering her the opportunity to tell and share that story with others could provide her with a sense of encouragement and empowerment that counters her shame. Rather than wither as the victim of a trauma, Rachael becomes an expert witness and advocate for others who share a similar experience.

In the midst of this trauma work around thriving, the pastoral counselor or caregiver has additional opportunity for encouragement and resistance. Rachael's faith was something that provided comfort to her. Helping Rachael realize how she might reclaim the goodness of life should develop in conversation with the strength of her faith.

The neuro-hermeneutical framework includes a process vision of the divine-human relationship. This means that past moments come together in the present to create novel possibilities for the future. Utilizing a process perspective, a therapist could rely on an interpretation of God's immanent activity in the world as seeking to provide persuasive possibilities in each moment. Realizing that both hope and fear are part of the divine-human relational milieu provides an additional perspective on what it means to act adaptively and responsibly in the world. A therapist utilizing a process framework might propose to Rachael that God utilizes the emotion of fear in order to persuade someone out of a relationship with a threat and into a greater possible relationality in an open-ended future. To see the emotion of fear through this lens is to understand its physiological and behavioral components as not only protecting us *from* a threat, but also protecting us *for* the continuation of our lives.

Thriving involves helping someone develop a sense of the hopes they have for the possibilities of living out a preferred identity. In Rachael's narrative we found moments of survival and coping. Woven in her story are glimmers of hope which directed Rachael's actions toward a future and the relationships she values. Through our double listening as pastoral caregivers, our theological perspective helps develop the relationship between hope and fear. As we help Rachael weave together this new narrative of fear and hope she gains the opportunity to choose from and live out many possibilities. Her awareness about the enriched narrative she initially shared empowers her to take a stand and develop the preferred identity she chooses. For Rachael to thrive doesn't mean that the trauma is forgotten; instead, when the narrative returns there are novel and creative

ways of engaging it. This helps Rachael reframe her relationship to the trauma in a manner which allows her to claim some goodness from it. Ultimately, connecting fear and hope through the same narrative Rachael first provided can facilitate the kind of meaningful theological and relational growth she seeks.

The neuro-hermeneutical therapeutic process revolved around the expansion of Rachael's initial traumatic narrative. Awareness of the initial motivation for survival could help Rachael reframe the fear she experienced during her trauma. Discussing the embodied nature of fear and the adaptive physiological responses that threatening experiences engender normalizes the emotional state. As she sought to cope with the event, we continued to thicken her narrative by seeking out moments of resistance and resilience. These counternarratives provided moments of strength when Rachael covertly and overtly resisted what was happening to her. Furthermore, we sought the input of others in Rachael's circle who could describe her strength and resilience. These moments of strength provide initial clues into Rachael's values and hopes. Intertwined in these moments of survival and coping we sought an understanding of God's presence during the trauma. Rachael's consistent desire to reconnect with the meaningful relationships in her life provided another glimpse of the things she hoped for in her future. Her relational motivation was utilized to connect her with a broader community of trauma victims. Additionally, it provided an avenue through which we could explore how Rachael might reclaim the goodness of life. Rachael was encouraged to see how hope was present throughout her ordeal and how she continued to live *for* something, rather than only running *from* something. Finally, by utilizing both the event and the subsequent activities

Rachael may have come to see the relationship between her fear and hope, adding complex meanings to the emotional states she felt. Thus, while her traumatic memory may not have abated completely, she was armed with the tools to re-interpret the experience as she felt it intrude on her life.

Conclusion

Throughout the course of this dissertation I sought to develop the meaningful impact that an interdisciplinary understanding of the emotion of fear and its relationship to hope can have on the therapeutic process. I began this project by arguing that we should pay attention to the differences between fear and anxiety. These differences began with the perceived emotional antidote of anxiety and fear. For anxiety, a sense of peace or calm is what is sought; for fear, it develops out of our acute sense of what we hope for and is abated by the realization and incorporation of those hopes into our preferred way of living. Besides advocating for a separation for these two different emotional states in the clinic, I argued that we currently live in a larger milieu which makes us more acutely aware of the things we fear, presenting us with opportunities to develop real or imagined relationships with a variety of threats ranging from crime to terrorists to hurricanes and tsunamis. In this “culture of fear” I believe we need new ways of thinking about the impact of fear on our lives as well as new methods of thinking about what it means to be afraid.

Three theoretical positions informed my description of the emotion of fear. In the third chapter, I examined the embodiment of fear through the systems of the brain, our evolutionary history and the behaviors passed down through successive generations. This

lead to a number of ways of understanding fear: (1) the emotion of fear is inescapable barring particular types of brain injury; (2) there are systems in the brain that produce the emotional state of fear and its subsequent physiological reactions; and, (3) these reactions are conserved across species. The amygdala is activated when we are afraid. It is distinctly possible that the memories which develop out of threatening situations are also tied to the amygdala. The final section of this chapter examined our evolutionary history. I proposed that we utilize a dual inheritance theory of evolution. For the emotion of fear this means that the emotional state differs from the particular threats we come to fear.

Human interpretation of the world provides the genesis for the things we fear. Through our experiences we develop memories and beliefs and imagine new possibilities. These things form the basis of our interpretive structures. Thus, while the emotion and behaviors are conserved, the threats we experience differ. We develop our relationships to threatening objects through various forms of communication. These range from family members to peers, television to first-hand experience, communities to culture. These threatening objects are woven into narratives which we share with one another, and they become part of the narrative framework which produces the identities we perform throughout life. At times, specific identities develop through narratives derived from traumatic experiences or fear-based reactions. Narrative pastoral therapy is designed to help people work through these fear-based or traumatic experiences. As a therapy of resistance, narrative pastoral therapists help people develop opportunities to take a stand against their fears or traumas. Process theology grounds the hermeneutical framework

which provides the therapeutic interventions in this dissertation. It also provides an important interpretive link between hope and fear.

Process theology provides a framework for assessing the meaning of fear. This is in contrast to previous chapters which dealt with fear from a psychological perspective. This chapter drew on connections between process thought and science in order to provide a framework for reviewing the data presented in earlier chapters. Process theology's use of the term persuasion to describe God's power enables us to see an open future and understand humans as relationally-determined creatures. Utilizing the ideas of initial and subjective aims I came to understand the meaning of fear through theological lenses which added complexity to its meaning. This chapter concluded by introducing a theologically and psychologically grounded definition of hope.

The sixth chapter introduced 15 propositions which provided a framework for understanding fear and hope. These propositions developed a theological anthropological framework, a pastoral theology of the emotion of fear and its relationship to hope and three themes to help guide therapeutic conversations. The seventh chapter examined both PTSD and trauma as separate but interrelated phenomena. Each term provides a helpful insight into fear-based memories and their lasting impact. The final portion of this chapter examined the case study of Rachael. Utilizing a neuro-hermeneutical framework the themes of surviving, coping and thriving were used to hypothetically treat Rachael's traumatic memory. Together they formed a novel way of interpreting her experience and helping her reclaim the goodness of life that she felt was missing.

Epilogue

This epilogue is meant to serve two purposes. First, it is an opportunity to discuss the context of this dissertation and why certain areas of study were not included. Second, it provides me with the opportunity to briefly discuss one additional area where I feel this constructive pastoral theology of fear and hope can be utilized with some effectiveness. To the former point, I look at history, gender studies and philosophy at secular cognate disciplines which could be brought into this interdisciplinary project. To the latter point, I want to discuss the relationship between public and pastoral theology. Without too much detail I want to outline some thoughts about how this constructive pastoral theology of fear and hope might be articulated as public theology. Furthermore, I believe this constructive pastoral theology of fear and hope might be useful in places where shared narratives operate around threats and trauma. With this in mind I want to present some of the work narrative therapists have done with group trauma.

What's Not Here

A dissertation is a limited container focused specifically on creating and sustaining an argument within the context of particular disciplines. Inevitably, the author has to make a decision about material that is included and excluded from their work. Some things just do not fit within the framework of the argument being made. In this case, three meaningful avenues of discovery were intentionally not included in this discussion. From the outset, I realized their importance; however, despite this fact

including these disciplines would have distracted from the psychological and theological argument I was building. These disciplines included: historical perspectives on fear, gender studies and a sustained philosophical argument about the nature and use of fear and hope.

Our emotional life pervades the fabric of society and the ways in which we construe history. Mention 9/11 and most likely a citizen of the United States will have an initial emotional reaction of fear, disgust, anger or frustration. Likewise mention the Constitution of the United States and a wide variety of emotional states may become apparent depending on their interpretation of the document and its uses. Not only do our emotional reactions feed our understanding of the historical premises of our society, our emotions shape the current society we live within. While I discussed some of this in the second chapter of this dissertation, I did not have the time to elaborate how our society, relationships and even religions have affected our understanding of fear and hope. Both fear and hope are constructs defined, reviled, shaped, used and abused by cultural and societal forces. The history that shapes our views is important. The use of propaganda to incite particular emotional states would be an interesting study to conduct. At the same time, a sustained argument regarding these historical uses of fear would divert us from focusing on the psychological and theological meanings of fear. While our understandings of fear and hope are shaped by the historical meanings projected onto them, I have chosen to focus on the neurological and hermeneutical understandings of fear in order to construct new theological meanings.

Another area that was not covered in this dissertation, but certainly merits some consideration is gender studies. In the society that pervades the United States, emotions are generally viewed as feminine. While men are often permitted to express anger, they are not meant to express the wide variety of emotions they experience, and if they do they may be chastised for it. This has multiple ramifications for the physical and mental health of men. Moreover, it has relational and communal impacts that are far reaching. Much has been said about the acceptable emotions that men can display, and fear is generally not one of them. Studying the impact and experience of fear in men may provide some insights into the embedded emotional attitudes of men. On the flip side, women are subjected to situations where fear is used in disempowering and controlling ways. Women are, by far, more likely to experience physical threats and abuse in their relationships. Emotional and sexual abuse from childhood creates narratives of fear that persist far into adulthood, limiting the experience and ability to experience the fullness of hope at times. Women are much more likely to be diagnosed with PTSD than men. Gender studies may provide important information concerning gendered attitudes about the relationship between hope and fear. Studying the impact of culture on fear and hope in men and the impact of violence (implicit or explicit) on women could help us develop targeted interventions to help both the individuals and communities experiencing fear. My choice to develop non-gender specific themes is related to the over-arching constructive theological meanings I believe are relevant to any interpretation of fear. While a foray into gender and emotional attitudes may be helpful in the future, I believe laying the groundwork in this dissertation comes first.

The final discipline concerning fear and hope not included in this dissertation is philosophy. Some philosophical discourse was included throughout the dissertation; however there was not a sustained philosophical examination of how fear and hope have been constructed by philosophers. Again, while this may have provided an additional source of knowledge pertaining to the constructs of fear and hope, it would have been distracting from the major thrust of the dissertation. This is a theological project, and while philosophy plays a great role in helping us understand human thought and activity, building a theological anthropology was more important than a purely philosophical one. Thus, rather than fully engage certain philosophers, I chose to utilize process thought and theology as the best metaphysical system of meaning to fully develop the arguments I was making.

Finally, I am sure there are other areas where this research into hope and fear might intersect our understanding of human activity. There is no way for me to stake a claim to all of the novel and creative associations I hope people make as a result of reading this. I truly believe that this dissertation is a limited vehicle; at the same time, I hope it provides meaningful imaginative discourses so that others can make their own assertions concerning the relationship between fear and hope.

What's Next?

Pastoral theology is a discipline that should operate on both micro and macro levels of care. This dissertation has worked at the micro level in order to develop meanings about hope and fear for clinical practice. Utilizing a neuro-hermeneutical framework, I pulled together some vastly different resources in order to develop new

theological meanings for the relationship between fear and hope. The next logical step for me is to apply these meanings to the macro level of care. This means using the themes and meanings developed from a neuro-hermeneutical framework to look at both the clinic and other communities of care. My goal would be to see how this interpretive framework can help us understand and re-imagine, through critical examination, the public rhetoric used by politicians, homiletic discourses by preachers and shared narratives in a variety of settings. Furthermore, in keeping with Graham's (2002) emphasis on justice as one obvious meeting point for public and pastoral theology, I would hope that novel methods of empowering people to act in relationship to narratives of fear might develop. To do this kind of work means engaging both pastoral theology and narrative therapy at different levels. For pastoral theologians the connection to public theology becomes vital. Moreover, a way of practicing narrative therapy in group settings can provide additional resources for working in communal settings. The result of this kind of work would be both novel insights for justice within the systems which purport to provide care and insights for working with communities who feel threatened or have experienced trauma.

The connection between public and pastoral theologies has been articulated by many pastoral theologians recently; in one such article Graham (2000) speculated that pastoral for the public meant defining it as "the theological discipline that critically examines the organizing myths, symbols, and belief systems operating within caregiving enterprises, and seeks to modify these so that care might be more effective" (2000, p. 11). The outcome of this kind of theological work is two-fold. It seeks to critically examine the theories of care that organize institutions of care. Furthermore, it offers methods for

care which re-organize these systems. The thrust of Graham's argument for pastoral theologians who want to engage in public theology is that justice must take center stage in our reconstructive processes for the clinic.

For this next project I would contend that the themes developed in this dissertation provide a good foundation for exploring the public use of fear and hope. Fear is a relational emotion and the next step in articulating a pastoral theology of fear and hope is further exposition of its relational and communal use. Utilizing the image of a living web, Graham asserted that "All are a part; all have room to move around; all are spinning the web; all suffer from its breakage; all reap its benefits; all celebrate its durability; all engage its repair" (2000, p. 14). This understanding of an interconnected reality is closely aligned with both process thought and narrative understandings of the social construction of the self and community. Utilizing these two disciplines as reference points provides additional grounding disciplines for studying the use of fear in public settings, as well as remedies that provide justice for those victimized by its usage and challenges for those inciting fear for their own purposes. Furthermore, these disciplines can continue to guide us in developing methods and practices for a variety of settings that experience or use fear/threats/traumas in maladaptive ways.

Process thought provides a source of knowledge which privileges relational understandings of life and faith. I find theological insights from this system of thought to be a contextually meaningful and relevant way to closely embody the love ethic (love of God, self and neighbor) that guides Graham's quote above. As a result, any practical developments coming out of process theology cannot help but include these relational

concerns. While they were acknowledged in this dissertation, a more complete understanding of the relational structure of life would be paramount to the completion of a project concerning collective care and the methods of the clinic.

Narrative therapy is, arguably, the most justice-oriented of the therapeutic paradigms. Looking at the practices of narrative therapy, social worker Denborough (2008) asks the following:

How can we receive these stories and engage with them in ways that not only alleviate individual sorrow, but also enable and sustain local social action to address the broader injustices, violence and abuses in our varying contexts? How can we provide forums for the sorrow, anguish and hardship of the stories we receive to be transformed into collective actions? I don't mean grand social actions, I mean local, meaningful, resonant, sustainable, social action or social contributions. (p. 192)

Collective narrative practices stem from a theoretical orientation of justice, resistance and social action. They provide meaningful ways in which the fears of a larger community can be heard and acted upon in a way that not only changes and challenges individuals but also the threats/traumas that affect them. Any further work on this relational examination of fear and hope would undoubtedly include collective narrative practices and the need for social activism.

What I have attempted to do in this brief epilogue is address some of the ideas I heard at the outset of my writing this dissertation. Furthermore, I tried to look at the future use of this research and pick a direction that fits for me, briefly outlining how I might plan a project focusing on the relational and communal use and experience of fear. We must remember that theological care is not just for the few who access therapy. Theological care is meant for the masses; it is meant for the systems we put into place to offer respite and healing from a broke world. Just as process theology reveals the

interconnectedness of reality, so to must our practices and theories of care. Graham (1992) provided these simple words about pastoral care and theology “to care for persons is to create new worlds; to care for the world is to build a new personhood” (p. 13). This dissertation has put forth new theological meanings meant to help care for persons who have experienced trauma. The next step is to envision the kind of world where our theological systems of care are oriented toward helping communities develop the resources to survive, cope and thrive in the midst of trauma. In this way communities can take part in claiming the fears and hopes that direct their lives and discover the beautiful and novel ways God calls us into life together.

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Endnotes

¹ Two searches using the following databases: Academic Search Premier, PsycNotes, and PsycArticles were conducted in late 2007. The first search using the terms “fear” and “psychology” yielded 16,000+ articles. The second search using the terms “anxiety” and “psychology” yielded 40,000+ articles. There was some overlap between these two searches; however, there was a significant amount of difference between the results.

² The references in this section reveal the thoughts of both social constructivists and social constructionists. I realize this may be confusing at times; however their shared skepticism provides a compelling case for looking at the *DSM* critically. The nuances of the location of meaning making with each perspective are not lost on me. However, my intention is to build a case from concern regarding the *DSM* rather than elucidate these nuances.

³ There are other definitions of anxiety, including Rollo May’s (1977) existential theory concerning the emotion. While these present nuanced descriptions of anxiety, they bear some resemblance to the two being used in this dissertation.

⁴ One brief observation concerning emotions and their antidotes is that during the Vietnam War, the cry from a vocal constituency was for peace in the midst of great anxiety about the purpose and scope of U.S. involvement in the conflict and what might happen next. What is different about the current age of war is that in the midst of our fears about terrorism, crime, or the stranger our cries of protest scream for hope in the midst of fear.

⁵ Freezing – do you remember where you were and what you doing at the moment you heard about the attacks, is that moment frozen in time for you?, Flight – do you remember the reaction of the nation, the grounding of airplanes, closing of businesses, and the admonitions to stay home during the immediate time around the threat?, and Fight – what has been the reaction to these attacks by the nation and those in power?

⁶ The delineation of fear and fears results from my interpretation of Johnson and LeDoux’s (2004) conceptualization of fear as, “subjective states (the feeling of fear) and bodily responses (behavioral, autonomic, and endocrine changes) elicited by threatening stimuli” (p. 228).

⁷ Alternatively, to talk about the brain without paying attention to the mind is equally careless, and we will spend time understanding human subjectivity in Chapter Three.

⁸ I use the term pathways to talk about the vast neural networks. Neurons are the primary cells of the brain. With the aid of neurotransmitters, impulses are passed via synapses, or gaps, between neurons. Depending on its purpose, “each neuron receives synaptic input from hundreds or perhaps thousands of neurons, and its axon distributes this information via collaterals (branches) to hundreds of neurons” (Hendelman, 2006, p. 1). Particular neurotransmitters are released into the synapse in order to help the impulse continue its journey. Different neurotransmitters are required in order to direct and pass along different impulses. These neurotransmitters help the new neuron figure out how it should deal with the impulse it receives, usually by exciting or inhibiting the neuron to pass along the impulse. This ensures that our original impulse (seeing words on a page) gets to the right part of the brain (language centers) for decoding. It takes about 1/1000th of a second for a neuron to receive information and send it along the appropriate pathway (Dubin, 2002, p. 10).

⁹ Additionally, the cerebral cortex may be mapped according to regions, or lobes. The four lobes (frontal, parietal, occipital and temporal) provide a geographical description based on the location of gyri and fissures in a typical brain. Gyri are the ridges of the brain, and fissures describe the deeper crevices

between the gyri (Hendelman, 2006, p. 40). The sensory and motor cortexes are found along a deep vertical fissure close to the middle of brain when examined from the side (a lateral view). If you imagine viewing the left side of someone's brain, the motor cortex is located at the end of the frontal lobe (which is the lobe closest to the forehead) before the fissure and the sensory cortex is located at the front of the parietal lobe after the fissure.

¹⁰ The term nuclei (nucleus) refers to "a local group of neurons with a common function" (Dubin, 2002, p. 25).

¹¹ Many of the regions we have identified thus far play a role in motor functioning. If you think about the quality and quantity of motor activities we engage in, it is a wonder that more of the brain is not dedicated to coordinated motor activity. From me typing this page (a fine motor skill) to your eyes moving back and forth across the page or squinting to read the small type of a footnote, the brain needs to organize, assign physical resources, and complete sequenced tasks. This all happens while you process the words, relate their meanings to your experiences and seek to develop an understanding of their context and relevance. If I think about all of the actions I commit to just by typing this note (ie – the movement of muscles to help me inhale and exhale, the coordinated movement of ten fingers which allows me to hit each keypad in the correct order to form words, the movement of eyes that scan each line for spelling errors, the contracting and relaxing of the appropriate muscles to allow me to sit erect, the movement of my head and neck as someone walks into the coffee shop where I am working, and so on.) and there are a multitude of things that can go wrong, but here I sit, hitting the correct keys, breathing, blinking and reading. Considering the amount of activity that is required just to sustain life, it is a wonder that the brain can be organized to produce anything more than motor activity.

¹² LeDoux offers two reasons for doubting the traditional view of a limbic system. The first reason is that "there is no widely accepted criteria for deciding what is and what is not a limbic area" (2000, p. 290) (See also Wehrenberg & Prinz, 2007; Citow & Macdonald, 2001; Hendelman, 2006; Dubin, 2002 for similarities and variations on this way of understanding the limbic system). Second, he believes theories about the limbic system do not "explain how the brain makes emotions" (p. 290). Additionally, Dubin, believes that use of the term "limbic system" is decreasing, "except as anatomic shorthand, because it does not accurately mirror parts of the brain involved in emotion or that that matter, any single set of associated functions" (p. 60).

¹³ Hendelman refers to the different parts of the limbic area as structures (p. 203). He also uses the term limbic system without problem. My hope is to provide an alternate way of talking about the limbic area without the baggage of it becoming the "emotional brain."

¹⁴ Smell is the only sense not initially processed by the thalamus before continuing on to other portions of the brain. According to Dubin, olfactory signals "go, instead, directly to the olfactory cortex and surrounding regions that deal with emotions" (p. 35).

¹⁵ Imagine taking a "Y" shaped rubber band where the top ends are thicker than the bottom and wrapping it a little over three-quarters of the way around a baseball and you can somewhat visualize how the hippocampus and the thalamus physically relate to one another.

¹⁶ It is important to note that almost all of the structures of the brain are bilaterally symmetrical. This means that in most cases there is two of everything in the brain. Thus, as we talk about the amygdala, we are talking about a pair of amygdala.

¹⁷ Fear conditioning is also known as Pavlovian conditioning. LeDoux explains that "In Pavlovian fear conditioning, an emotionally neutral CS [conditioned stimulus] is presented in conjunction with an aversive US [unconditioned stimulus]. After one or several pairings, the CS acquires the capacity to elicit responses

that typically occur in the presence of danger, such as defensive behaviour,... autonomic nervous system responses,... neuroendocrine responses,... etc” (2000, p. 292).

¹⁸ Joseph LeDoux believes that this “thalamo-amygdala” pathway still performs an evolutionarily helpful function in most mammals. In rats, the response time related to the activation of this pathway is 12 milliseconds (12/1000th of a second) enabling a quicker response to possible threats in the environment than if the impulses were sent from the thalamus to the cortex to the amygdala (thalamo-cortico-amygdala pathway) (1996, pp. 163-165).

¹⁹ Phylogenetic and ontogenetic fears have to do with the genesis of a fear. Phylogenetic fears are those fears believed to be handed down through genetics (in this case the authors discuss spiders and snakes as examples, but strangers, heights and enclosed spaces have been used as other examples). Ontogenetic fears are those fears that have been conditioned since the birth of a particular person. These fears might include guns, knives or syringes as examples.

²⁰ For a more in depth review of theistic naturalism and the theory of evolution see Griffin’s (2000) *Religion and Scientific Naturalism*.

²¹ In Chapter One, I distinguished between fear and anxiety utilizing earlier psychological formulations in a deconstructive format. I augmented this research with sociological data that calls for a separation of fear and anxiety. Some new psychological research has tested for a measurable difference between fear and anxiety. For example, Perkins, Kemp and Corr (2007) found that there are psychologically measurable differences between fear and anxiety. Their results implied “the surprising possibility that existing personality models have somehow overlooked the importance of fearfulness as a personality trait and might be usefully supplemented by such a construct, both to provide a more comprehensive sampling of the personality factor space and also improve their capacity to predict applied performance” (p. 259). Additionally, their research corroborated the theory of defensive direction proposed by McNaughton & Corr (2004) which separated fear and anxiety based on defensive direction.

²² It is important to note here that many people only discuss three defensive behaviors. Fight, freeze and flight tend to be the most readily witnessed with regard to defensive behaviors. Deflection and submission, which fall under the category of appeasement, are talked about less in most research studies. This could be due to some difficulty understanding the “intentions” of this defensive behavior. Additionally, there is some research that looks into differences between fear and anxiety based on the defensive direction of the behaviors associated with particular emotional states. McNaughton and Corr (2004) distinguish between fear and anxiety by proposing that fear behavior takes one away from a threat while anxious behaviors cause one to approach a threat. Their theory further delineates the differences between fear and anxiety and the outcomes of the behaviors associated with each. While their work is outside the scope of this chapter it does help frame some additional differences between fear and anxiety.

²³ Richardson (2007) provided a brief refutation of the notion that we are predisposed to fear snakes and spiders based on the actual ratio of poisonous to non-poisonous varieties of these animals (p. 16). Furthermore, the APA reported that phobic responses to any threat fall in the 4-9% range of the human population (2000, p. ??). If there was some veracity to the claims of evolutionary psychologists for particular phylogenetic fears, we could expect that the rate of phobic responses might be quite higher than it actually is at this point in history. To me, it seems more likely that we have maintained the capacity for the emotion of fear, but the specific things we fear arise ontogenetically either through experience or through the evolved wisdom of the communities and cultures in which we live and become.

²⁴ Faith, I surmise, is the crux of belief and action. It is certainly a form of theory-laden practices.

²⁵ One of the roles of psychotherapy is to offer a safe semi-public audience for these imagined possibilities. We are in a position to listen to the memories and beliefs and hear the future-oriented imaginings created by the client. We can then offer alternative interpretations which allow the person to imagine new possibilities through gained knowledge, reconstructed beliefs/memories and novel creative tools.

²⁶ I have chosen to use Atkins' *Narrative Identity and Moral Identity: A Practical Approach* as a conversation partner in defining and explaining narrative constructions of the self. Atkins work constructs narrative identity around three perspectives which I find particularly helpful in explaining how we come to know who we are and how we should live.

²⁷ In fact, there are numerous researchers who are looking into a connection between narratives and the brain. Pastoral theologian Hogue (2003) wrote that "Storytelling is a universal human activity. Persons in all cultures of the world tell stories. Like perceptions, images, and memories, stories are also products of our brains... Our brains automatically put images and memories together into stories in the brain's ongoing automatic processes of making sense of experience and of the world" (p. 82). Neurological research is not advanced enough to be able to pinpoint areas of the brain which are specifically involved in the comprehension and construction of narratives (Mar, 2004). At the same time, we are learning more and more each day about our capacity for language and the meaningful ways in which this is shared. I believe we can safely say that when we construct our realities, we do so through internally and externally constructed narrative discourses. This capacity is only afforded to us because our brains are capably organized to produce such narratives.

²⁸ Early leaders of the narrative therapeutic tradition White and Epston (1990) rejected the traditional meaning of the term therapy as a descriptor of their understanding of narrative processes. They stated that believed the term therapy to be "inadequate to describe the work discussed here. The *Penguin Macquarie Dictionary* describes therapy as the 'treatment of disease, disorder, defect, etc., as by some remedial or curative process.' In our work we do not construct problems in terms of disease and do not imagine that we do anything that relates to 'a cure'" (footnote, p. 14). They have shown some preference for the term therapeutic conversation. I will utilize both terms in this context.

²⁹ Many of those practicing narrative therapy reject the term client. I will continue to use it, acknowledging that "client" is an imperfect term laden with historical meanings which are not altogether positive. I do this because it is the dominant term in therapeutic circles, and one cannot challenge the meaning of something by merely ignoring it. I will most often use the term person/client as a reminder of the person first language often used in postmodern therapeutic practices.

³⁰ Post-structuralism is a reaction against structuralism. According to Payne (2005), structuralists "claimed to perceive 'deep structures' in all human life and activity, and proposed that it was these structures which mattered rather than local, individualized variants and differences" (p. 28). Thus, through structuralism we are essentially the same; we are motivated by the same general principles. Our common human structure has been taken to mean that some core being resides in all of us and our task in therapy is to find it. My understanding of post-structuralism stems from Payne's description of structuralist analysis which "ignores and therefore implicitly dismisses those very elements which through an author's unique voice give literary works their particular, individual quality as descriptions and expressions of life" (2005, p. 29). As the structuralist will search for the unique essential being thought to be hiding in each of us, the post-structuralist will look at the person presented before us and see that unique being in the narratives they tell about their lives.

³¹ Payne remarked that externalization is not to be used with "selfish, damaging or abusive actions" (p. 12). He stated that "the beliefs and assumptions used to justify the abuse may be externalized" (p. 12) but not the actions themselves. His rationale for this distinction is that "Naming abuse is a signal to both abuser and

victim that I will not go along with the abuser's attempts to avoid responsibility for his acts, and it encourages the victim not to understate, and thus underestimate, what she really experienced" (p. 44).

³² Payne and White have both mentioned that externalization isn't necessary in all circumstances. Sometimes it doesn't fit the story being told; other times it will seem too forced to work appropriately. The goal is to help a person move past believing they embody the problems they bring with them. Sensitivity to any situation will help dictate whether a practice will be useful or not.

³³ Payne lists three categories of questions which help guide therapists: landscape of action questions, landscape of consciousness questions and experience of experience questions (p. 85). Each of these platforms of questions seeks to examine a different aspect of a person's life and encourage them to discover and empower their own relationships to problem-saturated narratives. In the end, these questions also help people develop strategies for living out new identities relative to the problems they feel they face.

³⁴ The reciprocal may also be true as well. Namely, that our hopes for the future might also reveal the things we fear most in the present. That is a dissertation for another time and place.

³⁵ Process philosophy shares some roots with specific Greek traditions and Buddhist thought. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin provides another strand of process thought which shares similarities and differences with Whitehead and (later) Hartshorne's work.

³⁶ For examples, see glossaries in L. Graham (1992) *Care of Persons, Care of Worlds*, R. Mesle (2008) *Process-Relational Philosophy*, J. Cobb, Jr. (2008) *Whitehead Word Book*.

³⁷ I am fully aware that in other cultures this example might not be applicable, but there are other standards of behavior which are culturally influenced and place constraints on human behavior and action.

³⁸ In Christian theology, the most meaningful event which can help us understand the relationship between these two anticipatory emotions may be the eschaton. For those whose faith depends upon the reality of this event there are two anticipatory emotions which inevitably come into play when discussing or thinking about it, fear and hope. Simply put, there are some whose theological stances encourage them to fear the eschaton, while others look to it with great hope. Yet, these theological camps are not that far off from one another as both look to the same event with the hope of its arrival. The difference is seemingly in how they view their current circumstances (and that of the world and their efforts in it) related to what they expect to happen at the arrival of the eschaton.

³⁹ White's case study is with a person who is living with complex traumatic symptoms. While he never actually names it, he utilizes a narrative form of therapeutic practice where he is still able to help the person describe the things she values despite the trauma she has experienced. Herman (2004) advocates for a marked distinction between simple and complex PTSD. She described complex trauma as resulting from "prolonged, repeated victimization" (p. 45).

⁴⁰ Names and some details have been changed in order to protect the client.